PRISM
ANGLICAN MONTHLY
June 196
Vol. V No.

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PRISM

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Subscription rates (*post free*):

3 months, 5s.

6 months, 10s.

12 months, 20s.

Prism can be obtained at Church bookshops

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The Place of Sociology

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

There has been what is called Christian sociology enterprised within the Church of England for rather more than a century; and since about 1930 the title has had a particular connotation and appeal. There is at present in the English universities developing attention being paid to academic sociology, a subject pioneered in Germany and in the United States of America, and now gaining stature in this country: while Oxford still holds out against having it taught as a separate discipline, Cambridge has very recently followed the lead of Keele, Sheffield and elsewhere and made its first academic appointments in this field.

These two things, Christian sociology and academic sociology, are markedly different from one another, both in their practice and their aims. The first purpose therefore of this number of PRISM is simply to consider these differences. This needs doing if only because there seems to be a widespread suspicion, shared by many Christians, of what sociologists are trying to do.

The argument between Philip Mairet and Maurice Reckitt springs from the mainstream of Christian sociology as it has been practiced within the Church of England. They were both intimately associated with the journal *Christendom*, which Mr. Reckitt edited throughout its life from 1931 to 1951, and they are both founder members of the Chandos Group, which for thirty-five years now has been meeting fortnightly to discuss these matters.

Mr. Mairet's thesis, and Mr. Reckitt's rejoinder, fall within a line of Anglican thinking that stems from F. D. Maurice. It bases itself on the importance of the Christian doctrine of Creation, and argues that if Christianity is a faith that provides more than consolation and camaderie for the religiously inclined, it must all the time be trying to comprehend the developments and tensions of contemporary society: and comprehending them involves two things,

knowing what they are, and submitting them to the judgments of Christian revelation.

Put so simply, there might seem little to distinguish the century-old tradition of Anglican "sociology" from the prophetic evaluations that have been repeatedly made by perspicacious Christian thinkers concerned with society ever since the time that Constantine put the Church in a position where it could regard this as part of her mission. The distinction lies in the Anglican thinker's concern for knowledge. It is not enough, they have in effect been saying, to denounce the evil ways of the world, and baldly proffer salvation to its inmates. It is only when we begin to study what it is people are like, how they are organised, how wealth is distributed amongst them, what urges and appetites move them, and wherein lies the wretchedness theologians label Sin, that we begin to press the application of the Gospel.

> *"The Welfare State has appeared to cut the ground from beneath the feet of the Christian sociologist."*—THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

Thus in *A Christian Realm*, a Church Union discussion pamphlet first issued in 1941 (before the Malvern Conference) we read:

> "A natural order would not be a Utopia without sin. But it would be a Society in which sin could be distinguished for what it was, not disguised as necessity, hallowed as 'enterprise' or revered as progress."

This well indicates what has until the recent past activated those who have held the title of Christian Sociologists. Now, when we read what they have had to say, it sounds naïve, with a naïveté that points at once to their success and their limitations. Their success is that most of us who read PRISM no longer even feel that the Christian's concern with society is a matter that needs asserting, let alone questioning; a journal of Christian sociology in the twenty years of its existence has achieved that much of its intention.

Their limitations, as Mr. Reckitt acknowledges, are that they have left no apparent successors. In part this is due to the changing nature of political concerns: the bomb, world tension and the problems of economic and political growth in new nations are the headline concerns of our times, and they do not lend themselves to the sort of critique implicit in the very title of *Christendom*.

Yet there are still in Western, and more narrowly in English society, plenty of problems that Christian thinkers thrash around to

judge: apathy, affluence and the need we keep hearing (most urgently in *The Long Revolution*) to rediscover "a sense of community". Spasmodic efforts go on being made to study these problems from a Christian point of view, such as John Todd's symposium on *Work*[1] and the Bishop of Middleton's study of *Church and People in an Industrial City*[2], as well as such smaller publications as *The Church's Understanding of Itself*[3], with its attempt to assess the effect of religion in four Birmingham parishes. In general it is nevertheless the case that in the last ten years nothing has been emerging comparable in importance or cohesion to the achievement of *Christendom*.

WHY IS THIS? Why is it, we want in this number of PRISM to enquire, that co-ordinated Christian comprehension of our society has got dissipated? For it is noteworthy that even PRISM itself, insofar as it has over the last four years reflected the concerns of fresh Anglican thinking, has had remarkably little to say along these lines, whatever our original aspirations may have been.

In spite of the shift in political concerns that I mentioned, from the well-being of England to the survival of the world, it is with society rather than politics that the popular mentors of our age are now concerned; with how people actually manage to get on with the complex business of living rather than with what magic methods of government are most just for them. In the 'thirties and 'forties the best-selling authors on matters of contemporary concern were men like Harold Laski and G. D. H. Cole and Middleton Murry, as well as Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells from an earlier generation, all of them men whose prime interest was essentially political. It is hard to name their direct successors today. In their place we find writers chiefly concerned with society: the Americans, Whyte, Riesman, Vance Packard and C. Wright Mills lead the field, and our own Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams hunt with them. Their sales suggest that it is with society rather than politics that serious readers are nowadays occupied.

It could also be said that this growth of general interest is associated with the development of sociology as an academic pursuit; and just as the popular leaders of thought twenty years ago reflected the political liveliness of for instance the London School of Economics and Political Science at that time, so now the popularity of paper-

[1] Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960. [2] Lutterworth Press, 1957. [3] S.C.M. Press, 1957.

backs about society shows that to a considerable extent sociology is replacing political philosophy as the discipline in which academic debate about our common living is becoming most fertile. At present this trend is more marked in the United States (as again the best-seller lists imply), but already in England I am not alone in having the strong impression that an annual conference of sociologists generates far more lively concern among its participants than the equivalent gathering of political scientists.

Up till 1939 and right through the war, indeed even in the years of Labour government that followed, it was easy both in this country and in America to go on feeling that politics mattered, and that a concern with political questions was of the first importance to citizens of democracies that were beginning to enjoy their hard-won maturity. When after Korea we all settled down resignedly to the persistence of world tension, and started handing out indiscriminately the trophies of democracy to the successor states of the Western empires, the excitement, the preciousness of our own politics evaporated almost overnight. We had got our liberal democracies,

> *"At the same time the security of the Welfare State is crossed by the radical insecurity of a world that might suddenly be blown to bits."*
> — THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

and could watch them fitfully spreading; and seeing their shortcomings, the prevalent attitude hovered between a caustic acknowledgment that they were facades ill-concealing an undemocratic structure of power, and a stolidly held belief that they were preferable to totalitarianism. So by the end of the 'fifties we had ceased almost to see much point in reflecting about our politics any longer.

Popular interest was shifting to the study of society, as in the wake of the welfare panaceas it became increasingly clear that blanket remedies overlook the complexities of lots of different sorts of people hacking out their lives in a crowded island like ours. Thus it has come about that the present fashion in England is for detailed studies of particular aspects of our society. We are all at once alarmingly aware of how little we know about how one another lives; and, since we are frightened of making sweeping recommendations, an activity which formerly was felt to be the business of politics, our present preference is to map in small detail the acres of our ignorance. One illustration of this preference is the subjects the serious Sundays study in their detachable insets; a more pertinent example is *Time*

& *Tide's* present efforts to dig up for us new mines of recondite factlets. Because for sanity's sake we react against the glossy simplification of our never-never-land society presented by the advertisers, that it is made up of nothing but happy couples under forty setting off from their mortgaged semi with their two kiddies for a picnic, we have to keep burrowing for the unknown warrens it conceals.

If this is all sociologists were doing, then Christians should be very happy to muscle in. But the matter is not so simple. Sociology's claim to be a science rests on the assumption that in principle it will one day be possible by using the precisest methodology to elicit through observation and enquiry all there is to be known about the behaviour of human beings in society. The assumption rests upon our present vast ignorance about ourselves, which psychology has already taught us to suspect, and linguistic philosophy encouraged us to accept. It is further vindicated by the apparent success of studies of voting behaviour. An intelligent American friend of mine was discussing this with me last August.

"You know", he said, "I just don't see how I can avoid voting Democrat: my ethnic grouping, my religious affiliation, my vocational allegiance and my income bracket all dictate that I should."

When I suggested that he might compare the merits of the rival candidates and then make up his mind which one to vote for, he replied sadly, "No, I don't think you can look at things that way any longer".

The point of the story is that it indicates the immense influence that sociology, with its claims to accurate prediction, is beginning to enjoy in America. Shrug it off as a flash in the pan, or reject its pretensions as untenable, but the claims of sociology to tell us more about ourselves and our probable public behaviour have yet to be dismissed. One may take leave to doubt whether even the Americans will ever have the patience or the resources to pursue these implications to their fullest possible extent; one may even derive comfort from thinking that predictions based on statistics that are in turn drawn from quota-samples, however carefully constructed, never pretend to bind individual behaviour. But to ignore altogether the development of sociology and its further potential is sheer folly.

Perhaps the central reason for the widespread suspicion of the subject (echoed in Oxford's refusal to have it taught as a specific academic discipline) is that unlike political theory it appears to be morally anaesthetised. Political theory, whether discussed by Mill

or Marx, Mazzini or F. D. Maurice, could never escape from some sort of moral attitude, even if it became a consciously anti-moral one like Nietzsche took. Sociology, pursuing what is thought of as the objectivity of the physical sciences, seems able to stand outside morality; all it is apparently doing is to count, classify and compare, restricting its comment to what is implicit in any particular choice of correlations. Yet the father of modern sociology, Max Weber, who is rightly remembered for his advocacy of the logical separation between fact and value, himself defended the making of practical value-judgments as "an imperative requirement of intellectual honesty".[1]

> *"These difficulties notwithstanding, there might still be possibilities for sociology if the gospel which we preached retained its integrity as the sovereign will of God demanding and enabling the response of man* in the totality of his being." —THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

Insofar as they have paid attention to the proceedings of academic sociology, and not merely been bemused by the emergence of yet another mystique, it is understandable that Christians have felt impelled to shun a discipline second only in the radicalism of its claims to modern biology. But in rejecting the fullest claims of sociology, they have overlooked the fact that even among sociologists there is still basic disagreement about what their subject can achieve.

IT IS THEREFORE POSSIBLE and, I would submit, proper, for Christians to recognise the scope and limitations of sociological investigation as being broadly defined by our ignorance. We do after all know very little about what our society is like. To confront it with the uncompromising claims of the gospel, and, once rejected, wash our hands of it, may appeal to our eschatological impulses. But to do that, as we see herectical sects like the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses busy doing at the moment, is highly presumptuous. If the Church expects to be listened to and looked to, it must first itself be ready to look and listen. The problem of communication, at present much vaunted, is a two-way one. Nor should the aim of this attention be solely to make a rapid appreciation ready for the next evangelistic sortie. If we believe God is interested in how society is shaping, who are we not to be too? Judgment of it we can leave

[1] *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, American ed., Glencoe Free Press, 1949.

to Him in His own way, and ourselves get on for the moment with the business of sheer comprehension.

The aim of F. D. Maurice and his three generations of successors was to establish the prerequisites for restoring the sense of community they found implicit in the idea of Christendom. Their achievement was to restore to its rightful place the Christian doctrine of Creation. Perhaps we in due turn should rediscover the meaning of the doctrine of the Fall, by which all of us, Christians and non-Christians, are bound through our human existence. There is thus need for a detailed comprehension of our society to see in what ways it bears out that doctrine. Simply to compile a list of contemporary sins is totally inadequate. A more hopeful procedure is to begin by acknowledging all creation as severally and corporately corrupted, in need of God's redemption. Then we shall have no more need to be frightened or aghast at the claims of sociology than most of us are by the exploits of Major Gagarin. Its disproportion, its claim to open up an immense new vista of knowledge, has been a temptation inherent in the pursuit of wisdom ever since Eve was first tempted. It is precisely where fresh spheres of knowledge, whether sociology or the new cosmology, arrogate to themselves potential omniscience, that they reveal their own limitations and the relevance of the doctrine of the Fall. Christians by investigating and appreciating the claims of these disciplines, and not just shunning them, can help in the task—to which the Church is called—of redeeming them, of guiding them to fulfil their particular function in the spread of knowledge, for which, we might well say, they have been divinely revealed and ordained.

"*Recover something like the theology of Charles Gore, not in its philosophical dress which is dated and limited, but in its fearless blending of the denial of the world and the affirmation of the world's possibilities and in its integration of dogma and spirituality. Then there may come, from a heavenly source and yet in a natural milieu, the power to speak about what society ought to be like and ought to do in respect of this or that. The weakness of sociology lies not in itself, but in the failure of theology to give it what it needs. There is a theology through which sociology might again run and not be weary.*" THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

From a Sociologist's Casebook

Mr. W., aged 23, is a Roman Catholic who lives by himself. He is an Irishman who is a regular worshipper at church and who receives communion about once a month as was his custom when he first started at the age of nine. He often attends benediction on a Sunday. He belongs to no organisations of the church except a sodality but he does go to mass on the first Friday of the month in the evening. He says prayers twice a day kneeling down and has a special devotion to Our Lady and the Sacred Heart. He recites the rosary, fasts and abstains from meat on Friday, and said that he read books about the Bible though not the Bible itself. He makes the habit of wearing a scapular which he would be sorry to lose—"I would sooner have it. Something might happen to me if I did not have it." When asked how much money he gave to the Church he replied, "That's a secret". His answers to questions might well have come out of a child's catechism, though there were occasions when he was not too sure of the answers. "Baptism cleanses us from our original sin." "Is everything in the Bible actually true?—Yes." "Do you believe Adam and Eve were people like you and me?—Yes." "The mass relieves those who are in purgatory . . . There are eternal torments in hell." He is a "paying member" of the "General and Municipal Workers" but has virtually no interest in trade union or local affairs. He never goes to a football match, does not smoke or go to the races, but he does have "a bob on the Catholic pools" and has an occasional drink. He reckons he goes to the cinema and a dance about once a week. He reads the *Daily Express*, *The People*, the *Sunday Dispatch* and the *Catholic Herald.*

The room in which he was living was decorated with cheap religious pictures and statues. There was a holy water stoop which he said he used frequently. He felt that "religion keeps you safe. I don't know how I would get on without it . . . You can be a good Christian anywhere if you have the will."

The Present State of Christian Sociology

PHILIP MAIRET

It is just over twenty years since the Conference on "The Life of the Church and the Order of Society" met at Malvern, under the chairmanship of Archbishop William Temple, shortly before his promotion from York to Canterbury. This assembly passed vigorously affirmative resolutions upon such projects for social welfare as Housing, Employment, Health and Insurance services—questions upon which the Government was very soon afterwards to commission the famous Beveridge enquiry, the first step towards the inauguration of British Welfare socialism.

We should take a dim view of a historian who argued from these circumstances that the British social revolution was engineered by churchmen. But he would be just as poor a historian if he recognised no connection between the events in question. It is common knowledge that the origins of Welfare State legislation go back much nearer the beginning of this century: the movements of thought and agitation that led up to it are very numerous and date from early in the previous century: and one such movement, born in the social crisis of 1848, was a ferment of religious thought, preaching and social action which persisted pretty continuously in Anglican and some allied church circles right up to the Malvern Conference, at which it was the major, or at least the most consistent force. Anyone who knew his England would suspect such a movement of having influence out of proportion to its inconsiderable numbers. A perspicuous historian would indeed be likely to enquire what became of this tradition when the war ended and the atomic era began.

Not that it really disappeared, but its attenuation and its supersession by some other movements is evident, and the reasons for this might repay investigation.

This movement or tradition differed from the many other reform movements among which it was one thin but persistent thread, both in inspiration and motivation. Its primary motive was a concern for mind and soul of man under industrialism: the passionate protests of F. D. Maurice, Ludlow and their true successors were

aroused by sympathy not only with the hardship and squalor to which men were subjected by industrial exploitation, but also by the loyalties, the courage and mutual sacrifice that working men showed in their movements of protest and of agitation for better conditions of life. Secondly, the Christian Socialists, as they at first called themselves, were inspired by a theological vision of the function of religion in the physical as well as spiritual redemption of the social order—or disorder. This was the theme of Maurice's *The Kingdom of Christ*, and it was doubtless this background of a "holistic" responsibility of the Church for society (although the original Christian Socialists were in practice engaged in industrial-co-operative and trade union affairs) which commended their movement, later on, to the catholicising movement in the Church. The religious socialist tradition was taken up and largely carried on by Anglo-catholic elements thenceforward, not without some modification of its historical and prophetic outlook. From this source it doubtless acquired the line of argument that sometimes laid it open to criticism as "mediaevalist"—a charge its supporters could repudiate if it meant any indifference to present realities, though it had some relevance to their social axiomatics. And it was precisely the comprehensiveness of their social vision, their desire to incorporate industry in the social order on principles which had a weight of Christian tradition behind them, that gave them a consistent, controversial force in Church circles.

WHAT DID THIS MEAN IN CONCRETE TERMS? Between the wars (which is where the present writer "came in") we were still seeking and urging new forms of worker-ownership and control—the same principle which the original Christian Socialists had failed to put into practice in the 1850's, and for which Cole and the Guild Socialists had fought in vain after 1918. In the contemporary crises of that epoch of mass unemployment, we were always against claims of capital and in sympathy with the demands of labour, as, e.g., in the "General Strike" of 1926. But our hopes for the industrial masses were nothing like those of their official leaders: the exemplary forms of association we envisaged for them seemed very difficult to graft upon those actually emerging in the field of real politics. On the concrete needs of the moment as they arose, the regular political reformers—or rather their Fabian advisers—had something ready, whatever we might think of their ultimate aims and their principles. Our longer

views were in our opinion sounder, but we were not doctrinaires who could oppose the practically good in the name of the ultimately best. Thus, the concrete desiderata framed by the Malvern Conference were in effect much the same as those envisaged by contemporary secular reformers though based upon different presuppositions about values and criteria. When those reforms were realised, the Christian sociologists wanted what was done and felt it was broadly right, but were not so sure it had been done for the right reasons.

That is one explanation for the apparent set-back in co-ordinated Christian thinking on social problems: the concrete aims in which it supported liberal socialism have been largely met. In that respect, Christian socialism is in the same doldrums as the Labour Party.

But in fact there has been no diminution of Christian social thought and action. On the contrary, the churches have never given so much systematic study to their social environment or taken such costly action outside their specifically religious interests—at least not in modern times. You might not be able, in this country, to point to a continuance of the kind of Christian social criticism and agitation mentioned above; and that, as we have just said, is mainly because its old terms of practical reference have lost their meaning before new ones are evident. A dominant new fact about our social environment is that the structural development of national society is increasingly subordinated to foreign affairs and the struggle to impose some order upon an international chaos. That is a new problem for all social thinkers, religious or secular; and the religious efforts to cope with it have been impressive. The activities co-ordinated, promoted or initiated by the World Council of Churches extend far beyond mutual aid between religious bodies in different countries. They include the resettlement of a quarter of a million state-less refugees: they have also enlarged the social consciousness of non-Roman Catholic Christians in every continent. But these things are too well known to need further description here.

Such labours of international scope have stimulated, rather than inhibited, church social action of insular range—of what might be called "Christian socialism in one country". But local efforts have become more sporadic and experimental: a good deal has been happening on "frontier" lines—co-operation between Christian members of various professions to raise standards of professional conduct and improve conditions. While this does not mean that ambitions to change society structurally have been abandoned, it

does seem to signify that, under present conditions, Christian and secular efforts towards social reconstruction do not move in parallel to the extent that they did in the recent past.

The consequent risk of relapse into conservatism has been remarked by, among others, Paul Tillich, who said that religious socialists have extended their social criticism so impartially as to be in danger of becoming supporters of things as they are, not because those things are good, but because reforms also are bad. Plenty of reforms, when carried out, do occasion new evils. But if there is an access of political caution, I think it proceeds rather from a search for something deeper than the liberal faith which underpinned so much co-operation between religious and secular reformers. Dr. Richard Niebuhr goes so far as to say that "The ethics of the 'social gospel' were mated with naïve faith in progress, and a thoroughly humanistic and anthropocentric religious attitude. The decline of the liberal philosophy has called the whole social gospel into question".[1]

There have been a good many expressions of that view, which is in one sense exaggerated. Many are stirring up the churches to agitate for support for the United Nations, for racial equality, aid for undeveloped nations, abolition of nuclear armament etc., good moral causes in which they co-operate with secularist movements more than ever; and this is still liberal idealism, now directed to supra-national aims. Nevertheless, I think it is true that thoughtful Christians doubt the ability of modern man to persevere in such sacrificial aims, upon merely humanist aspirations and what remains of liberal political convictions. Contemporary man seems to feel obliged to live too much by discursive thinking and the critical intellect alone, and no instructed Christian can believe that these provide a basis for a human society. As early as just after the first world war, W. E. Hocking wrote:

> . . . Today it is frequently asserted by exponents of religion themselves, that our best insight into the will of God is the verifiable welfare of society. Our religion seems to become, in effect if not in name, the religion of humanity. Thus the question has become acute whether the reference to God is any longer significant . . Is it more than an imaginative widening of the horizon, under which the same acts and qualities are required?

[1] In his preface to Tillich's *The Religious Situation.* (New York edn., 1956.)

. . . If we any longer maintain a separate place for religion in the work of transforming human instinct, the burden of proof is on us".[1]

Which burden he accepted, and so, in the same general context, did such Christian thinkers as Barth, Tillich, Dawson, Guardini and many others who passed through the social and moral catastrophes of the recent past. Never has there been such a ferment of philosophical thinking on religion in civilisation. How their labours are changing the climate of opinion in the Western world it is too early for anyone to estimate. I can only conclude with a brief effort to express the thoughts that occur to one reader after poring long and eagerly over their writings.

In Christian belief, the separation between religious and profane society is a consequence of man's mysteriously "fallen" condition, a correlate of his alienation from God, and of the dividedness of himself against himself. There was no separate activity corresponding to "religion" in Paradise before it was lost, nor will there be when it is regained. Here and now we have church life and ceremonial on the one hand and "secular" life on the other. So it is a world largely under sin, evil, death and the devil, though irradiated by the promise of redemption in Christ. But the salvation of man, collectively and in time, remains still inseparable from his social order, culture and civilisation. The arts, sciences and institutions necessary to his human being are both derived from, and contribute towards his status as a child of God; for all their corruptibility, they have immeasurable and indispensable potentialities for good.

CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGISTS may not have been considered overchurchy people, but the church-world dichotomy was too ingrained. Too often and too much we have regarded the "secular" functions of man in society as separate and lower than his "religious" life. Even a phrase we thought justifiable in its context, "the autonomy of the secular", misleadingly suggested a domain impermeable to spirit, kept up the wall of partition between religion and life. How little, if anything, of man's culture did not originally grow out of religion when it was one with the common life! Should we not have looked for the essence inherited from that parentage, which is still the spark of holiness by which every indispensable art, science and craft still lives with a sense of purpose, however dimly aware of its divine

[1] *Human Nature*, p. 275.

ancestry? Ought we not to have sought to fan these sparks into their pristine flame to the glory of God? It seemed good to us rather to foster the spirit of fellowship in work, the team spirit and harmony "on workshop floors", as if that could be the saving grace of a civilisation: but in the working life, comradeship itself comes from men's perception of perfections of their common service to which they can joyfully and sacrificially respond. Was not our sociology too "congregational", as it were, and too little sacramental?

Social criticism itself, to be creative, must start from insight into the transcendent impulse from which each faculty of social culture and organisation proceeds, not from studying their condition, still less their defects, from a churchly or any other standpoint. How this can be done for the faculty of science has been shown, for instance, by Professor Michael Polanyi, in his demonstration of the prelogical, unspecifiable character of scientific judgment.[1] His study reveals, in the creative work of science, and in some other spheres, an activity of spirit akin to worship, expressible indeed in Christian terms as a sphere of operation of the Holy Spirit for the liberation of man. And it is only from such a position that we can rightly estimate the misconceptions of science entertained in popular scientism and even by some scientists, or avert the danger of their imprisoning the soul of man in a sterile "objectivism".

Work of the same kind could be done in other domains of our cultural and institutional life. As I see it, it is to such studies of the essential nature of the social functions (constantly needing to be done over again) that Christian sociology will need to assign its leading minds in the future.

[1] Especially in *Personal Knowledge*, Routledge & Kegan Paul (1958).

The quotations from the Archbishop of York, which we reprint with his approval, are taken from his address to the 1955 Church Union Summer School of Sociology, later published as a pamphlet under the title of *Faith and Society*. For this year's summer school, the thirty-fifth, the committee, under Maurice Reckitt's chairmanship, have selected the theme of Equality. The other extracts, on pp. 8 and 20-21, are both case histories taken from an unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

Yes, But . . . . .

MAURICE B. RECKITT

Where I want to quarrel with Mr. Mairet is much less for anything which he has said than for what he has—in my view very misleadingly —omitted. Near the beginning of his article he writes that the Maurician element in the Christian social tradition has not "really disappeared but its attenuation and supersession by some other movements is evident". It is indeed; but despite his suggestion that "the reasons for this might repay investigation", I do not feel that such investigation as he embarks upon leads to any very convincing or satisfying conclusions, and I miss from his article any sense of anxiety, and even any clear realisation of the grave consequences of the "attenuation and supersession" to which he refers. It was said of somebody that "he looked the facts boldly in the face —and passed on". Mr. Mairet, it seems to me, looks at the situation as it presents itself today at the level of the average churchman's comprehension and hastily climbs up, to commune on the mountains with his peers, leaving the rest of us bewildered, disconsolate and leaderless upon the plain.

The word "leaderless" recalls the situation twenty years ago when it was far otherwise with the Christian social movement. William Temple stood then in a position relative to the public life of this country in which no Churchman has stood for centuries. Not only was he eagerly heard by the great mass of professing Christians; his words carried great weight with every thoughtful element in the population. He was pre-eminently (to quote the title of one of his later books) Citizen and Churchman. At the most critical period of the last War his brilliant little Penguin, *Christianity and Social Order*, with its firm foundation in theology, sold in its original edition (there have been others since) 139,000 copies. There was nothing esoteric about Temple's teaching; it spoke to everyman's condition, yet lost nothing of profundity in doing so.

To lose him in 1944 was for many reasons a grave misfortune, but no sensible person would regard it as such mainly because a great leader was no longer with us to repeat all that he had been saying in the years just before his death. Nothing was more remark-

able about Temple than the way his mind developed to meet the challenge of new situations; he was always in the best sense a contemporary figure. The tragedy in this sphere has not been that all Christian thinking came to an end because its acknowledged leader departed from the scene. Of course it did not, and Mr. Mairet has much to say that is interesting and not a little at the close of his article which is extremely illuminating, upon the directions in which that thinking has been extending its explorations. "New occasions teach new duties", and some of our contemporary "occasions" are new indeed. But new duties thus called for include not only meditation but effective proclamation of its results. This duty has surely been sadly neglected of late, but Mr. Mairet does not seem to be aware of the fact, or of its unhappy consequences.

Such explorations as have taken place have been conducted either at high levels of the theological stratosphere or in essentially introverted and even exclusive groups. Our "Frontiersmen", for example, are doubtless conducting highly intelligent forays along the borderlands where Christian thinking has to engage with the problems of life in the world of today, but they are singularly cagey about any discoveries to which those forays may lead them. We do indeed hear from other quarters strident claims to embody "Christian Action", some of which may, and a few of which certainly should attract our sympathy, but the specifically Christian character of their inspiration is not always obvious. And the demonstrations proceeding from circles exciting such enthusiasms seem often to suggest rather the satisfaction of a subjective moral indignation than any intellectual contribution to the illumination, the understanding or even the relief of a specific situation.

With Temple's death a great interpreter disappeared, and the rank and file of Christian folk, hearing little now of the "Religion and Life" about which many were eager to speak to them in the 'forties, have not unnaturally been led to deduce that the whole matter has been removed from the level at which their attention could usefully be given to it. The sages have withdrawn to the mountain tops, or secrete themselves in a few remote caves. The long procession of prophetic figures, stretching from Maurice to Temple: Stewart Headlam, Scott Holland, Conrad Noel, Percy Widdrington, Studdert-Kennedy, Basil Jellicoe (I speak only of the Church of England), has passed from view and seems to have left no successors.

The simple churchman, to say nothing of the wider audience to which Temple so successfully appealed, is left inescapably engaging with the problems of his time, enlightened and encouraged by no distinctive Christian voice. He might complain in the words of Chesterton's famous poem, "Now is there no man speaketh as we speak in the street". This would be an unfair judgment were we considering only what is known as "evangelism", where efforts to meet this situation are (with whatever measure of success) being attempted. But an evangelism sundered from illumination of the world in which the Christian's race has to be run is a maimed and blinded evangelism. Such illumination is the function of prophecy, which is not some peripheral or occasional activity of the Church, but one the nourishing and publication of which is an integral and perennial part of its duty to God and to society. Yet an evangelism sundered from prophecy is that with which too many churchmen today appear to be content, or to which they are at any rate resigned. I am sure Mr. Mairet cannot be so, but his article does not make us as sharply aware of the need to be discontented as it should.

For what do we now find? The field left open to the synthetic religiosity and shallow anti-Communism of M.R.A., or to the emotional revivalism of transatlantic spell-binders. Only a few months ago a journal sponsored by a body assumed to accept the function of sustaining and developing a long tradition of Anglican social teaching, included in its pages an enthusiastic boost of a forthcoming "campaign" by Dr. Billy Graham, a man the whole character of whose "evangelism" involves the repudiation of the basis upon which that social teaching rests. This same organisation recently scrapped a report of its research committee dealing largely with the problems presented by such new techniques as automation to an economy like ours in which livelihood is tied to employment, apparently on the ground that there was no danger of unemployment problems arising here—a conclusion not likely to commend itself to priests working on the north-east coast in Scotland or in Belfast—to say nothing of much of Lancashire. (Early this year *The Times* published an elaborate account of the huge problem of unemployment which automation has had a main share in creating in Detroit.)

Such a refusal to face any social issue until it has actually arisen has been only too characteristic of the churches in the past, but twenty years ago it had begun to look as though such intellectual astigmatism was on the way to being cured. Now it would seem to

be widely assumed that the arrival of the Welfare State has rendered any further Christian social thinking unnecessary.

The readers of PRISM have had a full account of the disheartening experience of those who tried to make something worthwhile of the much heralded Board of Social Responsibility at Church House, only to find themselves up against a wall of misunderstanding and irresolution on the part of their ecclesiastical overlords. In other quarters, while the duty of Christians to concern themselves with social issues is accepted, the grounds on and the methods by which this duty is to be fulfilled are sometimes very strangely conceived. No less an authority than Dr. J. H. Oldham, in a recent number of *Frontier*, basing himself on a certainly mistaken understanding of what thinkers such as von Hugel and Maritain meant by "the autonomy of the secular", appeared to be insisting that the Church, as such, could have nothing of distinctive value to contribute to the understanding of the lot of man in the social order today. Instead he demanded that only those expert in this or that function or vocation had any right to lift up their voices in the matter, and even then, it seemed, they would do best not to be overheard by those outside.

Mr. Mairet is of course right to point out that "a dominant new fact about our social environment is that the structural development of national society is increasingly subordinated to foreign affairs and the struggle to impose some order upon an international chaos"—though the "fact" is not so new as all that, having been pretty evident now for half a century. But the pressure of international tensions cannot surely present us with an alibi for neglect to scrutinise and to question the assumptions upon which our economy is based and by which the character of our people is being moulded. For this is insatiableness, than which it would be hard to find anything more flatly opposed to the Christian doctrine of man and society. A reviewer in a recent number of the *New Statesman*, writing of Vance Packard's book *The Waste Makers*, declared that:

> the crucial point is that the Americans (and ourselves) are committed to an economic system which is making us into debt-ridden consumers at the cost of amenities and values that make us human beings,

and went on to raise the question whether "both time and resources are running out for the richer capitalist societies". Moreover, good quality in production tends now to be widely regarded, at least in

the U.S.A., as rather a handicap to commercial success than otherwise. A Mr. Ashworth is quoted in this book as declaring that "maximum sales volume demands the cheapest construction for the briefest interval the buying public will tolerate". Faced by such an issue as this it is surely deplorable that nothing is being done within the churches today to attempt a realistic revaluation, in the light of what our Faith has to tell us, of the objectives of what is becoming more and more obviously a post-Christian society, and to discover in what mood of protest, of refusal or of challenging alternatives, Christians are to live in it. Have we to suspect that the Church is simply giving up thinking about what is involved for the spirit of man in such a civilisation because it is too difficult to bring an understanding of it to the point of positive application? If so, we are in sight of an abdication of prophetic responsibility as grave as that which allowed industrialism to develop its inhumanity to man with scarcely a word of warning or insight from religion.

The Church urgently needs the service of Christians trained to a high competence in social studies, who will not, as too many do now, approach their subjects with minds filled with assumptions, conscious or unconscious, based on sub- or even anti-Christian ideas as to the nature of man and the purpose of society according to the will of God.

It is just thirty years ago that "a Journal of Christian Sociology" began to appear where the problems of that day could be debated upon the basis of a broadly-conceived Catholic theology and an authentic Christian humanism. That effort was sustained for twenty years very critical for the Church and people of this country. No one has greater reason to be aware of the faults and limitations of this periodical than I have, but life was in it and its place has not been taken since. It is because life is in PRISM to a degree that is not evident anywhere else in Christian periodical writing today that I rejoice that this number has appeared and that I am grateful to have been invited to contribute to it. Voices from the past are of little significance unless they can suggest something to those to whom the future will belong. PRISM is of today and will, I hope and believe, count for still more tomorrow. May its care be not only for the souls of the faithful or for the welfare of the Body of Christ, but no less for the bewildered society of men whom the Church has failed to win, but to whose rescue nonetheless came that Saviour who is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Mrs. R. was born and bred in the town. Indeed, she first saw the light of day in the house . . . she now lives in. She, together with two other children, were the offspring of a labourer and his wife who never had many religious convictions. . . . At the age of four, Mrs. R. was forced to go to the nearby Church of England and attended Sunday school until she was about 13 or 14, when she was transferred to the Bible Class. . . . She received a certain amount of satisfaction in attending the services, and in her later Sunday school days went two or three times a Sunday. She was then confirmed and at first went to communion once a month, but this practice did not last long, and at the time of her marriage at 22 she only attended festivals. . . .

Her husband, a works chemist, was brought up in the same Sunday school as herself, but he abandoned all religious practices at a much earlier age than she did. . . . She was married in the church and takes a fairly firm line over the question of divorce, adding that people ought not to get divorced and certainly not be remarried in church. "Sexual relations between unmarried people are not sinful", she maintained. "I had no instruction from my parents either. Yes, I had sexual relations before marriage." She said she did not fill in football pools or go to the races but did have the occasional drink. She belongs to no clubs or institutes but is very keen on tropical fish. . . . The household takes three Sunday papers, the *Graphic*, *Pictorial* and *Express*, and the only other periodical reading material was the daily newspaper of which she did not know the name.

. . . Mrs. R. has not attended church at all during the past year and has not been to communion for the last ten years. She possesses a Bible but does not read it and abandoned private prayers from the time she was no longer "supervised by her parents". When her own children were young she taught them to say prayers but she ceased to watch over them in this after they were five. She was ignorant as to whether or not they said prayers at the moment. There has been no attempt by the Church to

draw her back to her former religious associations. The last time the vicar called was ten years ago when her father died.

. . . She said she believed in God, and after some hesitation, in the Trinity. She found it "very hard" to believe the Bible was literally true. The story of Adam and Eve was historical but not that of Jonah or Noah. Jesus Christ lived on this earth and rose from the dead, but was a son of God as "everyone is a son of God in the Bible. . . . He was a better man than we are!" With regard to eternal life she saw no difference between a man dying and a dog dying—they both went to heaven. Hell caused her some doubt. "I can't sort it out, I have feelings about it, but it's difficult to put into words." She was unable to give any examples of sin and she admitted that she had the children baptised "because it was the thing to do . . . and because I want the children to grow up into religion and in the direction of the Church". In her eyes marriage and confirmation were the first two sacraments. Holy Communion had had little impact on her—"I never felt anything more in it". . . . She confessed reading her horoscope from time to time, and after the children were born she never visited anybody until she had had them baptised. Questioned about this she replied, "I don't suppose anything would have happened to the children, but I just did not go visiting."

In spite of all this she said, "Yes, I am a member of the Church of England. I would like to go to church again, just for an odd time, not every week, mind you. . . . I am not sorrowful I have not been recently. . . . I would not go to any other church except St. W.'s. . . . It was necessary for a Christian to believe in God, but . . . a man could be called a Christian without going to church.

She was a jovial person, who proved co-operative in the interview. Her accent betrayed an element of artificiality at times. If she was trying to improve herself socially there was no suspicion in her own mind that this in part could be done by going to church!

France and America: two studies

Leslie Harman

One of the most rousing stories to come out of France since the days of the Resistance is that of the Church. Faced with a low ebb of vitality after the days of occupation, the Church has applied itself realistically to survey the situation and to deploy its forces effectively.

The way in which the survey was devised and carried out is described in a book written by Canon Boulard and translated by M. J. Jackson.[1] It is concerned with what Canon Boulard calls *religious vitality*. How spiritually alive is a man, a parish, a diocese, a Church?

The argument is that the Church cannot operate intelligently in any given area without a knowledge of the people, their past and present, their way of living and thinking, their attitudes and their interests. And so before the Church set about its post-war mission of revival a comprehensive study of every rural parish was made.

Serious thinking along these lines began in 1931 with the inquiries of Professor Gabriel Le Bras. It was not until November 1947, however, that the first *map of religious practice* was published. Since then similar maps have been completed for Holland (1951), Belgium (1952) and Germany (1954). These were maps of *religious practice* and we began by seeking criteria for the assessment of *religious vitality*. Of this Canon Boulard himself writes, "Notice first of all that it is a map of religious practice. Clearly religious practice is not the whole of religious vitality. Yet it is a sign the importance of which is not to be underestimated; the canons make attendance at Mass and performance of Easter duties obligatory, so that a man is not, in a strict sense, Christian, unless he practices his religion. In addition, this sign has the great advantage of being objective." Later he discusses, and we shall follow him, some of the other criteria which can be taken into account for a full assessment of religious vitality. For the present, religious practice is a sufficient index.

[1] *An Introduction to Religious Sociology*, by F. Boulard, translated by M. J. Jackson, Darton, Longman & Todd, 21s.

A return in which certain facts were recorded was made for every rural parish. The first result of their use was a percentage attendance shown for every parish. These results were divided into three categories: Category A, where the majority of the population practices; Category B, where a minority practices but where the majority still participate in the "great religious events of life"; and Category C, where the population deliberately and consciously is not, or is no longer, in the Church.

It is not possible in this article to convey how careful and realistic the study of conditions was. To give two examples which may speak for the thoroughness of the whole enterprise. Category A calls for a majority response from the population. A majority is reckoned as anything above 45 per cent of those over 21 years of age who make their Easter communion and in principle attend every Sunday. "Why is the lower limit put at 45 per cent? Because, with rare exceptions, minors practice in much greater proportion to their strength than adults, and thus 45 per cent practice of adults corresponds to at least 50 per cent practice of all ages." But the adult returns alone are given because "it is they who create in any place a climate in favour of or indifferent to religious practice".

The other example is summed up in the qualification "In order to define these areas we have added the uncatechised to the unbaptised, because a child baptised in a maternity hospital, if he subsequently receives no religious instruction can, from a pastoral point of view, be considered a non-Christian. He still has everything to learn about Christ and the Church."

MAPS WERE BUILT UP on these returns showing the category areas in colour. Immediately it was possible to see the condition of the Church in any given diocese or parish. This in a measure determined the policy of the Church in that area so far as appointments and planning were considered. For example, in Category A parishes the Church is in regular contact with the majority of the population through the pulpit and the confessional. "The mission of the Church is in an organic relation with society, in an authentically religious sense." In such a parish a good priest can continue the work. In the Category B parishes "everyone, with rare exceptions, is linked with the Church by the occasional offices at the high points of life. The Church here also is an organic feature of society, though in a more cultural sense. It has to make use of these occasional contacts. Since the age-range of most families is wide, and since parish

visiting is an accepted thing, these contacts are considerable. Pastoral policy on this basis is now a well-tried method." Here assistants are required to maintain a thorough system of visitation. In the Category C parishes where a breakdown has occurred between the people and the Church an entirely new approach has to be found. The consideration of this new approach is one of the finest and most fascinating pieces of research the Church has as yet undertaken.

The argument, closely reasoned and statistically supported at every stage, runs like this: There is what Canon Boulard calls a *geography of religion.* Two facts stand out clear when the maps are examined: large towns and channels of communication cut *corridors of indifference* into practising districts. To those who hold that religious practice is exclusively an individual responsibility, the Canon issues a warning. "We must beware of the naivété of holding a view of human liberty which takes no account of social pressures." From facts which seem undeniable he concludes, "If a man changes his religion, he soon changes his religious behaviour." Working out from the large industrial towns along the channels of communication there is, he believes, a *new civilisation,* based on technical progress, accompanied by an economic system, expressing itself in a new culture which is evolving from the empirical sciences. "It produces a new type of man possessing a technological humanism, which may not be particularly anti-clerical but which tends to be positivist." This new civilisation has an atomising effect. Jean Labbens is quoted as saying, "We live in a civilisation divided into many different groups. Modern man is rather like a small investor who has put his money into too many different concerns to have real links with any of them. Disaffection from religion seems to be largely due to the fact that he belongs to too many groups and to too varied cultures with the consequence that no value can be binding upon him."

So, thinking of the Category C areas, it is not a matter of publicly and persuasively preaching the Gospel or of constantly visiting the homes of the people; rather is it a matter of penetrating with the spirit of Christ and of making Christianity actively present in, the huge amorphous body of the new civilisation.

A chapter is included to make the point that this is not something new. "The clue to the religious geography of the countryside is to be found in history." From past records and present indications Canon Boulard draws several conclusions, two of which are of

significance in this present consideration. First, "We are not up against determinism, but a natural inclination of things or a habitual way of behaving and reacting which the efforts of men are quite able to redress. What some have done others can do. Thus the complex of which we were speaking earlier is divisible. You can have technical progress without materialism." Second, "These regions show us as well the only valid answer to the problem. It is that the new civilisation must be accepted, for it is an advance of the human spirit and cannot in any case be held back, while the religious values of the old must not be lost." This attack on the new civilisation calls for a far-reaching programme of *evangelisation in depth.*

The next chapter of the book takes us closer to the heart of the mystery and, as would be expected, clarifies still further the effective answer of the Church.

The cards for the parochial returns of religious practice are usually perforated and the parishioner tears out detachable tickets to indicate his age, marital state and occupation. All these factors have their use and significance in detailed studies. How religious practice varies with occupation or, more properly, with the social milieu which certain occupations help to create, is the most important of these. From information given in the parochial returns, maps have been produced for every social class. From the point of view of religious practice there are five quite different milieu. Canon Boulard in one places lists four but later he considers the professional managerial class as a fifth. Comparison is made between certain dioceses in France and, for example, the diocese of Mantua in Italy. The same phenomena are revealed, suggesting that here is another piece of sociological behaviour. The occupations contained within the classes as listed naturally vary according to the district and there are shifts in the tables of religious practice due to geographical and historical factors, but roughly the milieus are:

1. professional and managerial
2. tradesmen and artisans
3. smallholders
4. agricultural workers
5. industrial workers

By and large the order of merit so far as religious practice is concerned can be given in that order though classes 2 and 3 change positions in some districts and, in the example taken from Mantua, the agricultural workers went above the tradesmen and artisans.

At this point in his argument Canon Boulard returns to the original term *religious vitality*. He does this by means of the word *values* "which are communicated by the general climate of opinion, and which, without their knowing it, stamp those who live in their atmosphere . . . These values entail considerable differences in practical attitudes to life, in the sense of civic responsibility, for example, as well as in attitude to the family, to work or to time and in the conduct of leisure or approach to culture. It should be noted that there are regions of divorce and regions of stability in marriage, regions of bachelors and regions of vocation to the priesthood." Differences in evaluation are tied up with differences in thinking about things, in what the Canon calls *mentality*. The Church simply must be aware of, and must adapt its mission to, the mentality of every social milieu. When dealing with the need for a missionary policy the Canon says "Apart from some unexpected turn of Providence, thorough, lasting efficiency cannot be hoped for unless there is (*a*) a regional policy, (*b*) a specialised policy directed towards each social milieu and (*c*) a continuing policy." This is explained in some detail but it means that a given parish must be seen in its geographical and historical setting and that the interpretation of the Gospel must be stated in terms which are understood by the people and which are related to their way of life; and this approach to the parish must not be in the nature of a week's thrust but rather as a continuous penetration into all the areas of human life—personal, family, professional and civic.

Two paragraphs will serve to suggest the value and pertinence of the counsel in this book. "It is a continuity which counts for efficiency. It is becoming more and more clear that the unit of time is the generation. This means that steps must be taken to ensure continuity of policy. The best method is the team, a team of priests interlocking with a team of laymen. The team alone ensures continuity of pastoral care and, by the renewing of its members, the rejuvenation of its general policy." Again, "A geographical or social milieu therefore is impregnated with Christianity only where Christian homes demonstrate the theological virtues in all aspects of their life. When this happens there is real progress, because children born into such homes will absorb the Christian attitude to life. The main task of the Church's policy is to produce Christian families, the members of which live as Christians in their working lives, their leisure and their social and family relations. Youth movements

have succeeded only if they leave Christian families in their wake."

In a comment on the course of history generally the Canon borrows a term from biology and writes of *mutations*. "A mutation of human civilisation tends by itself towards materialism, that is, in a region which is in process of industrialisation or which becomes a tourist region or specialises in certain produce. When the mutation tends towards Christianity, it is never by accident but because Christians have deliberately taken the lead in the process by directing it towards Chrisitianity. This is the case whether the mutation is upward and progressive, or downward and proletarianising . . . The need is not only for devout Christians but for Christians who are capable, by their Christian quality and by their human competence, of taking the lead in the processes of transformation and of piloting them in a Christian direction. So piloted, a de-christianised region can attain a Christian level of life."

IN ONE OF THE FEW STUDIES that can be compared with Père Boulard's book, Michael Argyle has some thought-provoking suggestions.[2] He invites us to agree with him that we commonly assume human nature to be what he calls *lawful*. That is, we expect a man's life to be reasonably predictable. For example, we advertise a vacancy and we require candidates to send in applications together with the names of referees. If we short-list a man on his qualifications, we take up the references. By doing this we are admitting that where the candidate has been honest, sober, industrious and so on, in the past, we are prepared to suppose that he will continue to be in the future. Where, on the other hand, we find evidence of some juvenile delinquency followed by a bit of adult "form" we, however kindly disposed we may feel, would watch our step before offering that man a position of trust and responsibility; until, that is, he had proved himself. And this is prediction. We expect human nature to be lawful; to run true to type.

If this is true, argues Argyle, does anyone seriously think that religious beliefs and experiences are purely random events, unrelated to a man's way of life and to natural causes? Is it simply by chance that you are interested in religion and your neighbour is not? Or is it that the reason he put up to you when you invited him to some church service or function is true and valid: "I'm not made that way." If there is sufficient consistency in a man's life to enable us to make a prediction about his general attitudes and behaviour, is it not possible for us to predict his religious observance and response?

[2] ***Religious Behaviour***, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.

Argyle himself is more positive. He says: "It is already possible to predict with some accuracy whether or not someone will be a regular Churchgoer from knowledge of certain antecedent conditions and information about his personality." From this he advances through a supposition to an important conclusion. "Suppose that before long it were possible to give a satisfactory psychological explanation for the main religious phenomena. If this were done . . . religious people (could) say that *there* are the conditions under which people come to knowledge of God." In that hope lies the justification of all the work that is going into the study of methods of prediction in religious behaviour. Could we find the conditions under which people come to knowledge of God then we should be well on the way to the discovery of a missionary policy and plan which, as parsons, Sunday School teachers, Youth leaders, apologists and publishers, we so sorely need.

The fact is that we have not got the techniques; we don't know how to create the conditions under which people come to knowledge of God. We are years behind our colleagues in the kindred disciplines of human understanding. We still flourish from time to time the crude instruments of our spiritual forefathers but with what results? In a paragraph summarising a detailed section on *Evangelistic Meetings*, Argyle says: "In meetings of the Billy Graham type, 2-5 per cent of those present make 'decisions', and 50 per cent of these are still active a year later." Thus some 1-2 per cent of the vast congregations drawn by these occasions seem to be permanently changed, and of course among these there are sometime practising Christians who have been revived. Many would criticise and even condemn this method of evangelism but Argyle says: "Attitudes and beliefs can be influenced by verbal communications; these can be delivered face-to-face at public meetings or via the mass media of radio, television and print. Although the mass media reach a wider audience, the effect on that audience is less than at public meetings—the traditional vehicle for religious evangelism."

If this is the best we can do, it is high time we set about a more urgent and realistic survey of our methods and this we can begin with a study of those conditions under which people come to knowledge of God. Argyle attempts to isolate and assess those factors in a man's make-up and conditioning on which a workable prediction can be made of his religious behaviour. His book gives chapter and verse for the conclusions he draws. Most of his material

is quoted from projects undertaken in America. There was no thought of an over-all investigation; every project was designed for its special purpose. Consequently there are certain inconsistencies, overlaps and omissions. It all needs doing again for our own generation here in England. But at least it has been shown that there is work to do and that this is of the utmost significance. In Canon Boulard's survey of religious vitality in France today, we have the prototype of the instrument we need to use in England, though now we could construct something more precise and practical—thanks largely to the preliminary work of Michael Argyle.

His book should be read. Much he says in it needs the qualification he gives in other chapters. To quote would lead to confusion and misinterpretation. As I see it, there are five questions which stand out from all his inquiries as being representative and crucial. These are: What is your sex, age, job, political party and denomination? On and around such information the Christian sociologist must work if he is to attempt a prediction of a person's religious vitality. Given a clearer understanding of the correlation between these factors and a sharper definition of their significance, one may hope in time to come into possession of the facts which govern the conditions under which people come to knowledge of God.

Leslie Harman, who derived his concern for understanding people as preliminary to converting them from his experience as a prison chaplain, is now rector of Shellingford, Berks. Eugene Rolfe received considerable attention for his recent book, *The Intelligent Agnostic's Introduction to Christianity.*

Community: Sense or Nonsense

EUGENE ROLFE

Christian social theory *can* speak direct to man's state and demonstrate the conditions in which personality may be realised? But, to do this, it must be ready to drop old snobberies and have the humility to learn from contemporary social 'science' and depth psychology, in the faith that wisdom and knowledge cannot ultimately clash.

One of the greatest artists of the twentieth century has gone very close to the heart of this matter. He wrote: "Perhaps the greatest contribution to the social life of man made by Christianity is—marriage. Christianity brought marriage into the world: marriage as we know it. Christianity established the little autonomy of the family within the greater rule of the State. Christianity made marriage in some respects inviolate, not to be violated by the State. It is marriage, perhaps, that has given man the best of his freedom, given him his little kingdom of his own within the big kingdom of the State, given him his foothold of independence on which to stand and resist an unjust State. Man and wife, a king and queen, with one or two subjects, a few square yards of territory of their own: this, really, is marriage. It is a true freedom because it is a true fulfilment for man, woman and children."

(D. H. Lawrence, "Apropos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*")

It is scarcely necessary to argue the proposition that in a "good" family people are spontaneously persons. (The fact that a "bad" or perverted family can be the breeding-ground for the subtlest slavery does not invalidate this essential truth.) In a good home, one is never isolated and never submerged in the collective: in germ, then, the family contains the solution to that social dichotomy between "individual" and "mass" which has split mankind into the schizophrenia of East and West.

The first plank of a Christian social programme will therefore inevitably be the cultivation of the family. To this, all Christians would agree. But cultivation implies a "culture", a soil in which the plant can grow. As Lawrence suggests, a modicum of privacy and of private (or rather *personal*) property are needed if personality

is to express itself. The ideal must be "a room of one's own" for every member of the family. The handyman and the housewife both need space and materials to perform with; they can also join hands in working in the garden, which is "cultivation" in every sense of the term. Once grant the family its natural habitat and you have that relationship with the earth and the matrix from which *homo urbanus* is increasingly alienated. There is (one suspects) very little poliomyelitis among handymen and gardeners; and the incidence of delinquency and neurosis is not very high among them, either.

We must therefore have the courage to demand the provision and ownership of houses and gardens as the normal and approved form of family habitation. Blocks of flats (a necessary evil at this stage) are ultimately to be cleared away as the affluent slums that they are.

Place, people and work are the social trinity pointed out for us by the Frenchman, Le Play—a trinity in unity, by the way. But it is when we shut our front doors, leave people and place behind us, and start the rushed journey that will deliver us at work that, for many of us, the tragedy of depersonalisation sets in.

To the old-fashioned villager, locality and family were still very much with him as he worked in the fields; and the work, however oppressive, back-breaking and unhealthy was never in itself inhuman; it was a form of cultivation. So at work he was still very much of a person. But the factory management or the administrative machine are not interested in the family background of the worker or his relationship to his native commune; they are not interested in the worker as a *person* at all; they are interested in him purely as a functionary (which is what the terms "official" and "operative" both really mean). This point is not a political hit against "capitalism" (which, in the classical sense, no longer exists) or in favour of "communism" (which is a cover name for the most ruthless collective drive for industrialisation in the history of mankind). Common to both systems is the mechanisation of labour, which means using persons as machines.

Work, in reality *the* God-given tool placed into man's hand to enable him to cultivate, to domesticate, to train and to tend the garden of the human personality, has become the major instrument of life's frustration. Juvenile crime is one index of this problem; delinquency may be described as a failure in domestication. If a

man's vital interest is flowing into his work, he will lack the *energy* for extra-mural destruction. Destruction is creativity denied an outlet—as the vernacular use of "to create" suggests.

The tragedy is that this mechanisation of labour has come to stay and has got to be accepted. We are reminded once again of those stockpiles of flats into which persons are packaged like classified ants: it is a necessary evil at this stage.

What is Christian Social theory to say to this central problem of our society?

Three lines of approach may be suggested:

1. Support all possible efforts to humanise the productive process;
2. Back the campaign for shorter hours and (as a corollary) press for the strongest possible public encouragement of handicrafts, arts and all other forms of creative activity, so that real productive work may come back into its own outside the shortened working hours;
3. What about social relations on the job? Where work is inhuman or monotonous or trivial (as it must be for multitudes for generations to come), the quality of human relations at the workplace will tip the balance between success and failure. It is at this point that Christian social theory has it in it to make a really decisive contribution.

The natural social unit for human work or play is the *group* (gang, team, class, etc.), which is *a psychological derivative of the family*. The second great plank of a Christian social programme will therefore be *the cultivation of the "psychological family" or group.*

ANYONE WHO HAS BELONGED to a good human group will remember the "familiar" atmosphere it generates—the friendliness, the humour, the private language sometimes. At once the collective, however vast—the combine, the department, the Army—is transformed into a *home from home*, where the individual can function spontaneously as a person (the dividing line between the group and the crowd would be the point at which the individual is lost sight of). As Elton and Mayo's studies tend to show, the incidence of absenteeism and sickness in factories is highest among workers who have not been able to find a niche for themselves in such a group. Isn't it possible that the absentee may be the group-family's unwanted child?

It is in fact the existence of these comfort-bearing sodalities which

prevents the worker from being completely crushed between the vastness of the industrial organisation and the inhumanity of the mechanical work-process. The group forms a kind of placental shield of warm humanity between the individual worker and the cold dark polluted stinking air of a civilisation which respects neither man nor God.

The old Catholic Distrubutism of Belloc and Chesterton is as dead as a doornail; the simple cause of its not very much lamented demise was that it attempted to contract out of the modern world. But this should not blind us to the golden granule of truth which it contained. This may be expressed in the lapidary formulation of a thinker of a very different stamp: "Bigness is the enemy of humanity" (Aneurin Bevan).

It is the essential soundness of our families and groups which has largely preserved the integrity of this nation against the vast, impressional corruptions of industry, the Press and commercial advertising.

The group is probably the most important subject of research on earth at present. How is a good group formed and maintained? How can the outsider be included in it? How can we prevent it from being exploited or disrupted? How are the relations between groups regulated? The future of the human race depends, not on attitudes to weapons, but on the relations between a few, quite small political groups.

A recent development has been the birth of many new, extra-mural groupings—seekers, discussers and the like. As John Wren-Lewis has pointed out (PRISM, July 1958), a number of groups derived from the most diverse *psychological* denominations have converged in the sense that they have all discovered the need for some "myth" to formulate the transcendent reality in their midst. This links up with Jung's discovery of the mandala, the image of totality in the human soul; personality is not enough. Any group, at any time, may become the vehicle of a sacrament.

RABBINIC THEOLOGY

ROY A. STEWART

Rabbinics has been neglected in the English-speaking world, partly because there are very few books about it. Yet it is of much interest to Jews for historical reasons and to Christians as an aspect of New Testament background. In order to make his work readable and serviceable the author has concentrated on theological problems which possess a living interest, and on issues in which Judaism and Christianity may be aptly and fruitfully compared. **21s net**

LORD OF THE TEMPLE

ERNST LOHMEYER

Translated by STEWART TODD

The passing of all ancient cult and the emergence of Christian cult is a remarkable historical phenomenon. To understand it one must be aware of the problems which beset the cult tradition of Judaism and of the power and content of the Gospel. What answer did Jesus give to the problems raised by the Jewish cult, its relationship to ethics to politics and the like? **15s net**

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Comment

The appointment of Dr. Stopford is very welcome. The great delay in announcing his appointment—which was not just one of official dilatoriness—has possibly given scope to the prayers of the faithful in a way which was not possible for the appointment of the archbishops.

London needs a strong man and an able administrator—one who is not afraid of being unpopular: because London will be the last bastion of the "Establishment" to fall. In it are situated the high temples of the Church parties. In it are many churches which by their nature are important and from which some clergy would not move except to a bishopric. Whereas once you could have found the lead in Church reform and Church life in London at such places as St. Martin-in-the-Fields, now you are much more likely to find it in Birmingham or in the country. This is probably bound to go on for a long time since London seems to be a place the problems of which it will be difficult to solve without giving the Bishop far more powers than he now by law has. Meanwhile Dr. Stopford ought to be ideal for the job.

Nevertheless there is one point which it is as well to clear up. We have seen that it is possible for Christians to be vehemently for or vehemently against the retention of the H-bomb and still be Christians. But it was a disturbing statement that Dr. Stopford made in that speech in Coventry, "It would be worth doing anything, even to destroy humanity, rather than run the risk of Communist enslavement". We are delighted that he has given us permission to publish a letter of his in amplification of that speech.

Dr. Stopford writes:

The statement attributed to me in 1958 was not fully reported, and, indeed, was distorted by the sub-editor's headlines. I had stated my view that any weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction must, like war itself, be clearly abhorrent to the mind of God, and that every Christian must do all in his power to remove the causes of war and to forward disarmament. That is where I would stand today. But, as far as I can recollect, I did go on to say, in answer to a question, that in a situation where the existence of nuclear weapons appeared to be the only deterrent to Communist advance, the Chris-

tian found himself in an agonising dilemma in which differing views could be held by Christians with equal sincerity. In no circumstances could the initiative in using nuclear weapons be right. But if they had to be used in defence as the only means of defending freedom against Communism then it might be the lesser of two evils to use them. The freedom of the spirit is so important that in the last resort it must be defended, whatever the cost. And the Christian who must see this phase of existence *sub specie aeternitatis* and who believes that death, which inevitably awaits us all, is the gateway to another sphere of existence must in the final analysis refuse to be terrified by the fear of sudden death into compromising with a force which he believes to be evil.

I may have expressed this three years ago in strong terms because I wanted to expose the dilemma in all its starkness. Since then I have tried in public statements and meetings in the diocese to emphasise the Christian conflict of conscience. I have, for instance, deplored a defence policy which would, in the event of open conflict, make it necessary to use nuclear weapons to stop an enemy advance because conventional weapons were inadequate. Equally I have deplored a British defence policy which would shelter under the protection of American nuclear weapons while disowning them ourselves.

In the situation of today, with apparent nuclear stalemate, I believe that we must do all we can (1) to remove the causes of war, and this means a far greater willingness to help under-developed countries even at the expense of our own standard of living, (2) to do far more than we are doing to show that the Christian "free way of life" really works in that free men and women, choosing freely, can and will choose the good and the altruistic, (3) to work for disarmament, with all its appalling difficulties, (4) to support the prohibition of nuclear tests and the inspection of nuclear weapons, at whatever cost to national sovereignty, (5) to give far more support to U.N.O. But I do not believe that unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons or unilateral disarmament would be right because we would be risking the destruction of freedom.

This is only a brief and inadequate statement of my own point of view as I now see the situation. As I try to think and pray about it and learn more of the realities of the situation I know that another point of view is possible which may be better than my own, but I am not convinced that it is.

R.D. writes:

The chapel of St. Dunstan's near the West door in St. Paul's is used regularly for private prayer. There seem to be more men than women (taking a week of twice-daily attendances) mostly well-dressed faceless men crouching quietly and for long periods over their hands. Prayer books are not available—only pamphlets on confession, marriage, suicide, death and other topics of interest. One West African uses the chapel for sleeping in. He reclines at length along the back wall and gives an air of permanence and almost domesticity to the otherwise uncosy Wren adornments. Since Freddy Hood became a Canon there a lot of notices about when and where to confess have appeared, and scores of people seeking counsel have been seen after services. In fact St. Paul's is a place where worshipping seems the proper thing to do. Incidentally, I do not at all subscribe to recent attacks on the unworshipworthiness of Westminster Abbey. Under its new Dean it already shows unmistakable and regular symptoms of religion: and for years back at St. Faith's Chapel was available at all times for private prayer, though it isn't very easy to find. I came across it in 1944 and frequented it fairly regularly until catholicising tendencies drew me to St. Edward's House, one of the prayerfullest places in London. The point is, if you want to pray there are lots of places to do it in, but you have to be on the look-out for them.

R.D. writes:

The affair of what the newly consecrated Bishop of Guildford with uncharacteristic guardedness termed "Crown appointments in the Diocese" of Guildford might more bluntly be called "How Mr. Boulton was done out of his job". To comment or not to comment? It's a difficult one. One does not want to add to the difficulties of Dr. Reindorp who is already, not surprisingly, distressed over the affair. (So, with admirable discretion, is Mr. Boulton.) Perhaps there are circumstances we haven't been told about. Other papers have already trampled too freely over the pleasant slopes of the Hog's Back. Indeed the *Daily Telegraph* which has always taken an intelligent interest in church affairs, the *Evening Standard* (which hasn't) in an editorial that one would have liked to have seen printed *verbatim* in PRISM, and *The Times*, have mustered public opinion far more effectively than the original plotters can

have expected or liked. The *Church Times*, which has recently and rightly decided to comment on such matters which previously it would have felt unsuitable for mention, deplored the matter but took the line that as Wittgenstein said, "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one should keep silent". But not PRISM? Okay then, this is what it looks like: a conspiracy in which the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Guildford are somehow involved, as well no doubt as other church dignitaries, clerical and lay, have decided that the man who has been the mainspring of the plans for the worship and witness of Guildford Cathedral and diocese and one of the finest pastors in the church today, should be bundled out of the job which no one supposed for a moment would not be his, with indecent haste, with subterfuge and trickery worthier of a palace *coup* in a South American Republic than a part, however sinful, of the Body of Christ. It couldn't have been me, the Bishopof Guildford says, I wasn't there. It is significant that he does not say "I was not consulted", only "I was not in a position to be consulted". One wishes his answer genuinely allayed one's concern not only for the victim of this trickery but for his own fine name. His obvious anxiety to inhibit the protests by his clergy do not add to one's confidence. *Yes, we fixed it up*, said Dr. Fisher; *we thought changes should be made, it's quite all right, leave it to the seniors, we're trying to find another place for this excellent fellow.* So far they have found a financially rewarding but pastorally inadequate job in Dr. Fisher's favourite county, Rutland, and in his place have found a suffragan bishop whose eminence might be thought to turn away the wrath of public opinion but who otherwise shows no sign of being either a more suitable man for the job or even the man first thought of as Mr. Boulton's successor. We don't think that is good enough. We—church people at large—are perfectly adult and entitled over a matter like this to the truth. Mr. Boulton is entitled to a good deal more. So far there are no signs that we are going to get anything.

The Rev. C. J. Warsey writes:

During this last group of sessions of the Convocation of Canterbury I made an intervention. My purpose was to draw attention to the loss suffered by Convocation through the "peculiar ecclesiastical death of one of her most respected members, the Provost of Guildford". I was admittedly "out of order", and the Archbishop of Canterbury told me to "sit down". It was within his power to put

me in order, but this he refused to do. He told me that he would not have accepted a motion on the subject, and in fact a group of proctors of the clergy had attempted this very thing. It was not only a proctor (who incidentally represented nearly 600 of the clergy), who was told to sit down in this matter. The Convocation of York was "told to sit down". The Diocese of Guildford was "told to sit down". Indeed, the whole Church of England was "told to sit down". In a matter of interest and concern to the whole nation, referred to in one national paper as "the sad, bad business of Guildford", and in another as working up to a "climax of unreality", the Church herself was completely muzzled.

Nor could this be said to be something which might involve *lèse-majesté*. The Church's quarrel is not with the Crown in its appointment of Bishops and Deans, but with the secular advisers to the Crown, who through a strange historical anachronism have in this respect an unwarranted stranglehold over the Church.

In a recent Session of the Church Assembly I mentioned the "slightly secular smell" of our bishops today. This phrase, like so much else, was not included in the Proceedings of the Church Assembly. But it is not the less true for being omitted. The Bishops and Deans of the Church of England appear to reasonable opinion both within and outside the Church as a body of partially clad gentlemen. They are not vested with any genuine moral authority by the Church herself, because before she can do anything (apart from what the Archbishop himself might do quite unofficially) she is presented with a cut-and-dried appointment which she has to suffer the humiliation of baptising with prayer, and with the farce of the *congé d'élire*.

C.M. writes:

Whoever can it have been among my co-adjutors who set the fashion for saying "I happened to be lunching at Bishopthorpe on other business . . .?" It's one I'm glad to follow, and I hope it lasts after July. The *obiter dictum* I think it is fair to record is Dr. Ramsey's criticism of priests who come to the Province of York and still after a year talk about "*up* here". "They might as well not be here, for all the good they're going", was his comment. Yet for all Rayner Heppenstall's recent *Encounter* analysis of the two Englands, cis- and trans-Trentine, one English and C. of E., and one in the most sinister existentialist sense *other*, it is ridiculous if

the C. of E.'s home mission stops short at a B.B.C. garden-party, aiming to do little more than humanise the uncouth. Jonathan Miller's hearty broad-minded vicar (in *Beyond the Fringe*, in this context an appropriate title), exhorting his lads to get the violence off the streets and into the churches where it belongs, is meant as satire; but as an appeal that we should take with us into church ourselves, our souls and bodies, all that full-blooded rumbustiousness best embodied in J. B. Priestley's Yorkshire, the skit may be more pertinent than its author meant it to be.

* * *

That is why Halton is so stirring. It is a shock to learn that the only full magazine coverage of Canon Southcott's House Church parish in a tidy Leeds suburb has been in the Country Churchman, while PRISM's one reference has been some clever crack or other. This needs remedying at once. We arrived on a Sunday afternoon, when a bus-load of parishioners were setting off for their annual Rogation-tide trip up to the moors. I don't want to lyricise meaninglessly, but it did immediately strike me that the group looked much more like people than like Church Folk. There was a pretty girl in a white hat, with her three babies, who at once was away chatting with my American companion. ("Chatting" is wrong; "flirting" would only make you say "well, really". Is there no word between them, to describe warm *agape* at work?) There were three spruced Teds, whose church loyalty came out as real as it was unaffected. There was even the bus driver, who didn't try and look as if it was nothing to do with him, the attitude you find is so common with most organists, electricians, vergers and other church functionaries. So when we went round to Mrs. B's, where the communion service was to be held at 7 o'clock the next morning, to ask if we could come, we were ready for the naturalness of her welcome. We found her with her children in the garden sunning themselves, and a casual neighbour gossiping. Nobody seemed surprised at our request. There was no holy hush to indicate self-consciousness at what they were doing. Mrs. B. wasn't horribly *au fait* with liturgics. She was just an ordinary aproned housewife, grateful to Vicar and David (the curate) for the way they kept bringing her religion home to her.

* * *

The plays of Christopher Fry were most popular at the time of the Festival of Britain. It is easy to see why this was. After the aus-

terities of war, his flights of fancy captivated the imaginations of what was soon to call itself the New Elizabethan Age. Now, in a plusher period, we plunge by contrast into the frightening asperities of the contemporary stage. Yet Fry is of more than ephemeral importance. Particularly in *A Sleep of Prisoners*, he economically and perceptively plummets the problem of good and evil, of the point of living. Londoners have an opportunity this month of seeing a tenth anniversary production given by a lively new amateur company called the Thirty Group. They are doing it at 8.30 p.m. on 15th, 16th and 17th June, at St. Thomas' Church, Regent Street, where the play was first performed in London. Anyone interested in booking in advance should write for 5s. programmes to James Gunning, 19 Hyde Park Gardens Mews, London, W.2.

Letters

REUNION WITH ROME

Dear Sir,

In his article on Reunion Mr. Fletcher starts from the assumption that the only purpose of unity is to "get a Church divinely protected from making at least serious mistakes". From there he goes on to argue that, if one is not to fall into sinful individualistic subjectivism, one is to accept an infallible authority from which the one Church would draw the one answer in matters of faith and morals. He then says that if one accepts one of the possible authorities as infallible, one is bound to take them all for such sooner or later.

Like most Romans of the more liberal kind, Mr. Fletcher believes Anglicans to be ignorant of the real Roman position, and how logical it all is. I am one among many who lost their faith because of the weakness and naïvety of Roman apologetic literature, but I was fortunate enough to finally find true Catholicism in the Anglican Communion. This is why I feel little indulgence for much of what Mr. Fletcher writes.

We all agree that the one Church of Christ is divinely protected from making serious mistakes. But unfortunately our disagreement starts with the interpretation of that first statement. Anglicans and Romans believe that Catholic Faith and Order are divinely appointed, and infallible. But they disagree about the meaning of

"Catholic Faith and Order". For Rome this means accepting all developments enshrined in the decisions of all Councils not only of the undivided Church, but of the Roman Communion generally; accepting Papal ex-cathedra definitions on matters of faith and morals ("such definitions of the Roman Pontiff of themselves—and not by virtue of the consent of the Church—are irreformable. If anyone shall presume (which God forbid!) to contradict this our definition; let him be anathema". Vat. Counc. 1870); and a neo-fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture. The disciplinary rules of the club do not allow criticism from lesser dogs about even secondary matters: the Church is always right. Rome works on the principle that by accepting an infallible authority, and therefore by achieving complete homegeneity in all the details of faith and morals, one holds the truth in all the details as well. This is a useful weapon for propaganda, but it can produce very odd truth indeed, and great spiritual dangers. The system may give temporary satisfaction to people who shun responsibilities, but often proves useless in practical situations, and can lead to moral breakdown. At its best, it is a hindrance to the spiritual life, for it obscures the Catholic faith by giving essential importance to all kinds of strange doctrines, rightly called innovations.

The illustrations given by Mr. Fletcher are good instances. It is true that the doctrine of the corporal assumption of B.V.M. had a long history before it was proclaimed a dogma. For certainly five centuries it was ignored by Catholics. It first appears in Gnostic circles. First records of it as a belief held by some Catholics date from the sixth century. It then spreads during the Middle Ages, and receives emphasis in post-tridentine catholicism. Mr. Fletcher is right when he says the doctrine did not originate the night before the papal declaration. But as a doctrine necessary for salvation, it is pretty new! That most Eastern Orthodox hold it as a pious belief does not change the fact that many of them think it was a deplorable mistake to make it one of the essentials of the Catholic faith.

The different attitude of our two Churches about contraceptives has its roots in a much more important question: the basis of ethics. The Anglican Church tries to follow New Testament teaching. The criterion is: is a behaviour in keeping with the spirit of our Lord? Is it compatible with a life of prayer and service? The Roman Church uses as her criterion a system of natural law

which gives a set pattern of Moral Man, based on a teleological attitude of the Aristotelian type, and modified here and there by some New Testament principles, and some papal encyclicals. Unfortunately papal encyclicals are often motivated by Vatican politics (they are one of the best dissuasives!); in a few unfortunate cases, fundamentalism mars the interpretation of the N.T.; and finally one may doubt that what is "natural" in the teleological sense, can be known with certainty, and can be equated with what is Christian.

As opposed to the Roman interpretation, the Anglican Church understands by Catholic Faith and Order divinely appointed: the Catholic Creeds, the Sacraments, and the Episcopate, but she prudently forbids the clergy to impose as necessary for salvation any doctrine which has no scriptural basis whatsoever. This does not mean that apart from the creeds and sacraments, the Anglican Church leaves her members in a doctrinal vacuum: there is plenty of teaching and advice, but no claims to infallibility. Why should there be a set answer to every detail of belief or of normal problems? Can narrow legalism ever apply to real life? Reading the New Testament one does not get the impression that the Church was founded on those lines. Does one see Peter presiding over the Apostles and dishing out infallible solutions to matters of faith and morals? Is the faithful member of the Church unable to take any moral decision that the clergy have to legislate everything in the detail? Are the clergy infallible in their moral judgment?

Anglicans hope for reunion with Rome, but they have no craving for papalism. They appreciate the role the Pope could play as a final court of appeal, but they do not think that the final court of appeal should summon all Bishops to be given the details of their job to the extent that they should become mere delegates of the papal jurisdiction. It is difficult for a Roman to understand that one can at the same time reject sinful individualistic subjectivism and complete dependence on an infallible authority, and that the Church need not be uniform and completely homogeneous. This is why Mr. Fletcher, while starting each of his arguments with cautious words like "protected from *serious* mistakes", "protected in some way however vaguely defined", concludes to the necessity of a panacea of infallible slot-machines (forgive the expression). The more embarrassing decrees of the Roman authority are then presented as justified because many people accept them, and

Anglican opposition discarded as if it were due to ignorance of what the dogma or the rule means.

Anglicans hope for reunion with Rome, not because they like Rome, nor because they admire its homogeneity, but because of our Lord's command that all should be one, and because things are happening in the Roman Church which might transform it to a point which would make union possible.

Yours sincerely,

YVES DUBOIS.

W.C.1.

LANKA

Dear Sir,

What really separates the two sides of the debate over the Church of Lanka? The press reports of the discussion in the two Convocations show that the conflict is not over the details of the scheme but over our basic assumptions on the nature of the Church. As I believe with the Bishop of Chester that the cause of Christian Unity has suffered a setback, which may, if things go badly in October, become a major Defeat for Sanity in the Church (to say nothing of charity or the will of God) I should like to raise two questions which I believe vie at the heart of this controversy.

The first is: *Are Free Churchmen to be regarded as fully members of the Universal Church?* There is nowadays a general disposition to accept all baptised Christians as members of the Church; but I suspect that in many quarters this admission is neither whole-hearted nor followed to its logical conclusion. To those who would in any degree "unchurch" the Free Churchmen I put forward the following consideration. If the Church is the body of people called by God out of the world to be the body of Christ, how can any individual or group within it have the right to say who belongs and who does not? Only God can have this right: only the host can say who are his guests.

The second question is: *What good purpose is served by calling Free Church orders either irregular or invalid?* If a mere technical defect in their form is alluded to them we should welcome such an easy method as the Lanka scheme of reunion for putting this right. If it is implied that they are not channels of grace an intolerably arrogant judgment is being made. If all that is intended is to point to the grace and virtue of episcopal orders (in which I heartily

believe) then it is quite unnecessary to cast aspersions upon Free Church orders as they are now. Of course they are *irregular* in the sense that they do not follow our rules and of course we think our orders are better. The problem before us, however, is not how to prove that we have been right all along, but how to share our treasure with our brethren in Christ.

Yours faithfully,

MARTIN CLARK.

Middlesbrough.

CARTOONS

Dear Sir,

I wish to challenge your answer to J. D. Ferguson concerning the cartoon in the March issue of PRISM.

Surely it cannot be a matter of Intelligence or Instruction which makes the cartoon offensive or not. People of equal intelligence can have quite different attitudes to the same thing, and even men and women of outstanding brilliance can, on occasion, be as stupid as anyone. I think this is very interesting and could help to prove that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and not necessarily the passing of a University Entrance Examination. Of course many of us would not be "misled" by it, but that is not the point. I buy two copies of PRISM every month. Both are read by many people, some of whom are Christians, some are atheists, some are agnostics. All these people objected to the cartoon. The instructed and intelligent did not like it and thought it harmful. The uninstructed and unintelligent were scornful. For myself, I am an artist and a teacher. Because I often have to illustrate the Gospel in a contemporary setting, or have to help people to appreciate the work of, say, Stanley Spencer, I may find it easier than some to see certain parallels. For instance: Imagine a present-day Mary Magdalene having been forgiven by Christ through one of His Ministers. On returning home she opens the book she has bought at the church bookstall and is confronted with the cartoon. What do you think her reactions would be?

Yours faithfully,

GLADYS ANDERSON.

W.C.1.

[I apologise to anyone who has been offended by this. But I maintain that no one will have been *harmed* or *misled* by this. Anyone who is

intelligent enough to buy PRISM is intelligent enough to know that the mere fact that the joke was put in cartoon form is a guarantee that it does not represent a true state of affairs.—ED.]

REVISING THE LITURGY

Dear Sir,

In the May issue of PRISM H. A. L. Rice says that "the Anglican Liturgy of the future ought to be a synthesis of Mattins and Eucharist". To this extent he gives a general outline of such a service. Undoubtedly "such a service might prove to be lengthy". But he says "an hour and a half at one go, so to speak, is not a superhuman achievement".

In a single-church parish, served by one or more priests, the time factor is not of primary importance. But in the country, where one priest is responsible for more than one church, time has to be considered.

Undoubtedly the parish communion is the ideal principal service for Sunday morning. But the service cannot last more than one hour if the same priest has to officiate in another church at some distance. The human element must be considered. Can a priest rightly be expected to officiate each Sunday at two morning services, each occupying one and a half hours!

The Prayer Book rite, sung with some hymns and a short liturgical sermon can be concluded within the hour. It cannot be held much before 9 or 9.30 a.m. Allow the priest thirty minutes to get to his other church for 10.30 or 11 a.m. In the second church the service is over by 12 noon at the latest, and this is late enough for most people.

With such a programme a one and a half hour service is out of the question. No doubt there is some loss through omission of Mattins. But which is the greater loss, Mattins or sacramental religion?

Some revision of the 1662 rite is necessary. But realistic revision must take stock of parochial circumstances (and prejudices). After all, as Peter Oakley says, "the 1662 Communion Order has a certain internal logic". Perhaps it is this "internal logic" which makes the rite so effective and acceptable as the Parish Communion, for it is simple, orderly and not over lengthy.

W. S. STANNARD.

Bury St. Edmunds.

LITURGY AND ARCHITECTURE

Dear Sir,

The Bishop of Southwark may have borrowed the term "sideboard" from Fr. Peter Hammond, but before Fr. Hammond published his book I can claim to have used the term in an article on "Church Design", published in PRISM, February 1959! May I therefore be allowed to make one or two points relevant, I hope, to Rev. E. Neville Martin in PRISM April 1961?

Mr. Martin speaks of "good reasons" for the medieval change in the siting of the altar, but he does not seem to me to quote any of them. Does he seriously contend that a majority practice is to be accepted as the right or best practice because most people follow it? Again, I do not think that his reference to the words of the late Dom Gregory Dix, O.S.B., is a good one. My own reading of Dom Gregory's "Shape" is that the change in siting and shape of the altar coincided with and was part of a decline in liturgical practice.

The fact is that the long, narrow, eastward sited altar does look like a sideboard, particularly when it groans beneath quantities of plate in such high places as Westminster Abbey on highdays.

Two other points: Firstly, is it necessary to concentrate so much as Mr. Martin does, on confession during the liturgy? Is not this attitude a hangover from the late medieval/post-Reformation period? One notices that the latest reforms of the Roman liturgy have drastically reduced the amount of confession during Mass, omitting it altogether, in fact, on one or two occasions. Secondly, the emphasis on "priest and people" seems to me to continue in the low mass tradition. That is, that we need only think of priest and people, V.I.P. and the herd, cleric and the rude laity. In fact, we are becoming more and more conscious that the Body of Christ as it goes about its "work of God" is a hierarchical society. Priests, deacons, laity, singers, lectors, commentators, all have their part to play. This "liturgical" concept of worship is happily reviving and it is to be hoped that it will not only be expressed in the new churches, but altogether ease overboard the tradition which the Established and Free Churches have laboured under for so many years.

NORMAN DAVEY.

13 South Hill Park Gardens, N.W.3.

ECUMANIA

Dear Sir,

I wonder if the silence of Devotee may not be infectious in dealing with the argument of David Edwards' alter ego *Ecumaniac.*

"Looking back we see no evidence that Christ or the Apostles entrusted the Church to bishops as Anglicanism knows bishops; episcopacy of the modern sort developed later". If by this Ecumeniac means that an Anglican bishop complete with lawn sleeves and Diocesan Board of Finance, was not among the archetypes laid up in Heaven, I agree. But only a man who thought that the essence of episcopacy was mere historic continuity would imagine that he either had, or could, make a point by saying this. The Catholic concept of the Apostolic Succession (we claim no specifically Anglican *doctrine* of it) does not, praise the Lord, turn on the sort of bishop that you happen to have at any given time, but on the belief that the Episcopate is the perpetual Apostolate; in unbroken sequence from the first Apostles, obviously, but not merely potent in its ancestry. A bishop is a new Apostle, the proper minister of the Eucharist, which is the Sacrament of Unity, and the link between the local and Universal Church. This has a bearing on the concept of sacramental validity which Ecumeniac either ignored, or did not understand.

When he talks of Christ's presence in non-episcopal churches, does he mean that their worship apparently bears fruit in the lives of the worshippers? I agree joyfully to the fact; but this does not affect the validity of sacraments ministered in such a church, though it speaks much about the state of the recipient. "Fruitful" and "Valid" are not synonymous, as the Report of the Doctrinal Commission made clear (p. 131). A valid Eucharist is, inter alia, celebrated by a proper minister within the sacramental economy of the Catholic Church. The function of the Eucharist as ministered by the Catholic Priesthood is "the building up of the Body of Christ by the ever closer and fuller incorporation of His members into Him", as Dr. Mascall says. Whatever the Sacrament does for the individual in the sects, it does not fulfil this last unitive function in respect of the Church.

It seems to me that Ecumeniac has sought to undermine the true ground and source of unity in the Catholic Church in his arguments for ecumenism.

Yours sincerely,

St. Boniface College, Warminster. J. T. Towers.

RED HERRINGS

Dear Sir,

It was heartening to read Valerie Pitt's article, "Red Herrings and Soft Answers", in your recent issue. As a parish priest of twenty years standing, who has worked in country town, village and near suburbia, one feels sometimes despondent as one reads certain articles in your's and kindred periodicals. For one is tempted to wonder whether the adherence to the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer, the ministry of regular pastoral visitation to the sick and to the whole, the daily care of souls of the middle aged and old as well as the young, are methods so reactionary as to be regarded as completely useless in these days of coffee-bars and rock and roll and worker-priests. One is not in any way denigrating the modern evangelistic techniques which are apparently required in the present social set-up, but one ventures to hope that your readers might sometimes spare a prayer for those countless priests who will never be heard of outside their parishes, whose work is both unexciting and unrewarding, but yet who, in spite of disappointment, loneliness and misunderstanding, are trying, however inadequately, to fulfil their ordination vows which remain unchanged in this changing world.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN OVERTON.

Henley.

Dear Sir,

Valerie Pitt continues to disappoint: I don't think that she has answered my points. She takes me to task for failing to realise that her criticism is in the highest sense positive and constructive: I am sorry, but I still find it unnecessarily vicious and beside the point. At least the angel in her parable had some positive authority on which his criticism rested: the Bishop's consecration promises. But she has still failed to provide any such authority for her advocacy of sitting still. In her last article she gave us a quotation as authority; this time we get the high-sounding phrase "the paralysis of the Cross" (which proves nothing: Easter Day and Pentecost succeed Good Friday in my calendar) and a reference to Charles de Foucauld. I, too, have read about de Foucauld and greatly admire him; I have had some contact with the Little Brothers as

well: theirs is a movement radically different to the priest workers', be they French or English, and they would be the first to assert that theirs is a vocation for some, not a theology for all.

One can only write about what one knows—that is the only reason why I took Woolwich as an example. I hope that I made it quite clear that we don't pretend to have any results to show as yet, nor do we claim to have all the answers. But we do think that Valerie Pitt has done the reformers less than justice: a few may perhaps fall into the sins of intolerance and impatience, but they don't all do it all the time—no more, I beleive, than any of the other sinful members of Christ's Body. Enough about Woolwich: we believe that we are right to undertake this experiment because we do not think that the priestly vocation is to prop up redundant and tottering parish machines ministering to shrinking congregations and revolving in ever-decreasing traditional circles. We believe that the priest's vocation is to minister effectively: and there is much in the present system that combines to make the Church utterly ineffective. I know what it is like to work single-handed on a housing estate—yes, with "rock and roll on Saturday nights, the Parish Eucharist on Sunday mornings". It can look very impressive from the outside, to the casual visitor or the reader of a letter written in a moment of enthusiasm. But, apart from the Holy Spirit, you need the strength and stamina of an ox and the personality (and I mean this) of a top-flight entertainer to get anywhere: and if you last five years before your break-down you are probably not doing your job.

Miss Pitt gave me some kindly advice; let me presume to do the same for her: if you were to mix a little charity with your vitriol it would improve your style no end, and you might even discover what a lot of people are beginning to suspect, that you really have nothing to say.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT HUGHES.

St. Mary's, Woolwich.

Dear Sir,

Me and my mates, startled by Miss Pitt's remarks, want to know which of us has been writing lots of articles on "my identification with the workers".

We seldom speak of ourselves unless we can't get out of it, and you never saw such a lot for wriggling out of it if they can.

As for this "Dehaute Enbas", if that's his name, I can only say we haven't met.

Yours faithfully,

with immense respect,

WORKER-PRIEST.

The Works.

H-BOMB

Dear Sir,

John Wauchope's attempted justification of the H-bomb as a mere deterrent simply will not do. Since the Defence White Paper of 1958, this country, through its Government, has been committed to the policy that "in the event of a major attack, even with conventional weapons, they would have to hit back with strategic nuclear weapons". This is based on the statement in the 1955 Paper that "most of us feel that determination to face the threat of physical devastation . . . is manifestly preferable to an attitude of subservience to militant Communism". Mr. Butler (in a Parliamentary written answer, June 3, 1960) and Mr. Watkinson (February 8, 1961) have confirmed that this strategy has not been changed. The doctrine of mere deterrence, with which we soothe our consciences, belongs more to the Archbishop's speech to the Royal United Services Institution on December 13, 1955, than to the policies of Her Majesty's Government. Christians should be quite clear what it is that they are accepting.

Yours sincerely,

KENNETH LEECH.

E.3.

Dear Sir,

Peter Oakley's suggestion for a "liturgical year" (PRISM, May 1961) is brilliant and bold. If adopted, it is just the sort of thing that would catch on in the Church as other ideas have done in the past. Unfortunately it is more likely that next year we shall be summoned to bow down before the B.C.P. enshrined in enamelled eulogy. "This priceless volume—this bond of the Anglican Communion"—you can almost hear the jargonese of the official party line rippling through the cathedrals.

Movements, like space rockets, have a way of going wrong, and it doesn't need much imagination to visualise what might happen in a liturgical year. The Church's authority over her ministers is so feeble that it might well develop into a ghastly free-for-all in which the present confusion splinters into utter chaos.

Mr. Oakley's *Plan* is too valuable to be brushed aside by fears like these and forgotten. It should be modified. To be of real use to the Church of England today—and not just to that circle in the Church of England who seem to get away with anything—the emphasis needs to be shifted from practice to teaching. The plan should be centred on the Eucharist: a "Eucharist Year".

This is no quibble. Rome may be dusting her parlour, but that does not mean the Church of England is ready to do the same. Romans have a veneration for eucharistic worship, inherited from centuries of Catholic custom, which Anglicans are only beginning to recover. Before the Church of England can even begin to convince the majority of her members that a reform of her liturgy is necessary, she must first teach them to think eucharistically. How many of them really believe that the Eucharist is the great act of worship of the Body of Christ, and not mattins, or the M.U. Corportate Communion, or the family service on Mothering Sunday? In the deanery in which this letter is being written, for example, only fourteen out of thirty-one parishes have celebrations other than "the eight", and of the thirty-one only two could be called rural. If the first half of the twentieth century has established anything in the Church of England, it is the opinion that "once-a-month" is the communicants norm.

The Eucharistic Year, using all the techniques which Mr. Oakley suggests, would aim at creating the kind of atmosphere in which the clergy could revise the pattern of Sunday worship in their parishes with the goodwill and understanding of their people. The liturgy as the Eucharist, and not the liturgy as in need of revision would be the theme. Even on a diocesan scale, there is need to stress this. How many diocesan conferences and committees begin with a Eucharist? Why are big events like dedications and pilgrimages tagged on to evensong? When are special services going to give way to the most special service of all?

If the Eucharistic Year resulted in a greater sense of obligation to be present at the liturgy among churchmen, a greater desire to prepare and be prepared from the Sacrament, a greater similarity between the number of Easter Communions and the number of Sunday Communions—that would be thankworthy. If it established a sense of dissatisfaction among churchmen with the present rite and a restlessness for revision—that would be wonderful. Then we could have our Liturgical Year. Then the tercentenary of the B.C.P. would mark a definite step in placing that remarkable book where it belongs—with the Magna Carta and Hampton Court and H.M.S. Victory among the treasured relics of our nation's history.

JOHN GUNSTONE.

Romford.

I regret that letters, which are always *welcome, have been so abundant this month that some have had to be left out and others held over.—Ed.*

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Reviews

THE REVISED PSALTER: The First Report of the Commission to Revise the Psalter appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Book I. Psalms 1-41. S.P.C.K., 3s. 6d.

Two bishops, one Regius Professor of Hebrew, two church musicians, and two acknowledged masters of English form the panel commissioned "to produce for the consideration of the Convocations a text of the Psalter designed to remove obscurities and various errors in translation, yet such as to retain, as far as possible, the general character in style and rhythm of Coverdale's version and its suitability for congregational use. Thus, as their preface states, their "duty has been not to make a new translation, but to mend an old one", and, having always in mind the feelings of those for whom any change in the familiar language of the Prayer Book may be painful, they have aimed to make their "mending" as far as possible "invisible". Here is a specimen from Psalm 19:

3. There is neither speech nor language:
   neither are their voices heard among them.
4. But their sound is gone out into all lands:
   and their words into the ends of the world.

The change there is so slight as to be barely noticeable; yet it makes all the difference in sense.

Here is another, from Psalm 37:

8. Leave off from wrath and let go displeasure:
   fret not thyself, for thereof cometh only evil.

As a further aid to our understanding of the psalms, the revisers have introduced quotation marks for direct speech in certain places; this is particularly helpful in the case of Psalm 2, where "the kings of the earth", the Lord Himself, and His anointed king, all speak their parts. And material for practical experiment in singing is given us in an appendix, where Psalms 1 and 25 are pointed first for Anglican chanting and then for selected Plainsong tones. They are eminently singable to both, though in the latter case they might have been set to something more interesting than i. 1 and ii. 1.

To praise the fruit of such devoted labours as have gone into the making of this version of Psalms 1 to 41 is a grateful task, and to find fault with it is the reverse and—what is more—may well appear presumptuous. But the rendering of that psalm of psalms, the

twenty-second, in this version is so misleading and so disappointing that this reviewer feels obliged to state her case. Nor is it only hers; for many years ago another Regius Professor of Hebrew, the late Dr. G. A. Cooke, of blessed memory, impressed upon her that this psalm was wholly retrospective to the end of verse 21. This means first of all that the Hebrew perfect in the opening question must be translated "Why didst thou forsake me", as in fact our Lord's quotation of it is translated in RV margin to St. Mark 15.34 and St. Matthew 27.46. Then to the middle of verse 21, the singer passes in review the ordeal from which he has but now emerged. He does this partly by description in the historic present, partly by recalling his own prayer while the ordeal was still going on. The climax of this is the cry with which verse 21 begins:

"Save me from the lion's mouth!"

And then, still retrospective, back to narrative:

And from the horns of the wild oxen *Thou didst answer me*! Of this last word the Jewish commentator Cohen says, "the Hebrew verb vividly reveals the lightning change of his mood. His pleading suddenly ends . . . as though a crushing weight had been lifted from off him." With verses 1 to 21 thus understood, the rest of the psalm follows as a song of praise to God for thus delivering His servant out of his extremity, a song which, like Isaiah 53, ends with the vision of the fruit of his travail, the consummation of his saving work. Thus the fourth word from the cross becomes a cry of relief and joy beyond all imagining, and from the end of the same psalm we understand the sixth. But the revisers have wrecked all this. In spite of saying that they have adopted emendations of the Hebrew text "only where they seemed overwhelmingly probable", and in spite of rejecting the Septuagint addition of "look upon me" in verse 1 of this same psalm, in verse 21b they have taken the Septuagint reading in preference to the Hebrew, and given us "my soul in misery" instead of the tremendous climax, "Thou didst answer me."

Dare we hope that they will think again?

A Religious of C.S.M.V.

WAKEFIELD MYSTERY PLAYS (*Mermaid Theatre*).

Though it may feel uncomfortable at first, you are obliged to use your imagination at this revival of the medieval mystery plays. Close your eyes (and there are moments when the acting will force you to do this anyway) and imagine yourself in your medieval banqueting hall. The mummers have come round again, the roast boar's head is steaming before you. Scenes from the Old Testament are followed by less attractively produced one from the New. Noah's "do-it-yourself" boat kit is alone worth a costly seat in the stalls.

Alas, the representation of Christ is miles from the mark. Here is no stern spirit inveighing against the city men of his day. This curious little fellow with his awful beard could no more have turned the money changers out of the temple, or banished the temptor in the spiritual battle of the wilderness, than the man in the moon. The last complaint is that it is all far too long. How many modern humans are endowed with sufficient concentration to sit through 3½ hours of anything? Precious few! Despite these faults, the crucifixion scene is intensely moving, the pageantry is superb, and the Mermaid is just the right theatre for this work.

HUGH MALET.

CASEY: A Dramatic Meditation on the Passion, by *Philip Turner*.

What must, I suppose, have been Crawley Town Hall was altogether the wrong setting for Philip Turner's musical Passion Play called bluntly,"Casey". It is designed for the echoing vastness of a cathedral nave, or a large parish church.

It is a measure of the excellence of the text and the competence of the amateur acting that the play overcame its unsuitable surroundings, and gripped the audience all the way through. Casey was outstanding as the foul-mouthed sergeant, sucking at his fag, seducing Eve the teenager, and, dressed in appropriate battledress (I do wish they had given him a .303) supervising the crucifixion. Philip Turner himself was excellent as the incredibly useless priest, flapping around the stage, well-meaning, but with no apparent answer to the appalling problems which life presented. The satire on the spiritual blimps of the Anglican Church was properly powerful, but ultimately kind.

It was only at the end that I felt sad and disappointed. The play faded away without leaving us even the remotest grounds for optimism. Tradition leads one at least to hope for a twinge of remorse if not the acual conversion of the centurion who supervised the crucifixion, but Casey goes out unrepentant into the ultimate darkness of Hell. Perhaps it is so, but in the middle ages they would have offered their audience at least a ray of hope.

HUGH MALET.

THE SCARLET BOY, by *Arthur Calder-Marshall.* Published by Hart-Davis, 16s.

This novel is well worth reading so do not be put off by the first seventy pages which are not very exciting. Although I am sure devotees of the Master will protest, Mr. Calder-Marshall in his approach to Christianity reminds one of the late Charles Williams, and indeed the parish priest in this book has very strong over-tones of the Archdeacon of *War in Heaven.* A very good readable Christian mystery story.

TIMOTHY BEAUMONT.

INTRODUCING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, by *A. M. Ramsey.* S.C.M. Press Limited, 3s. 6d.

This is in some ways a disappointing book since we expect so much from the next Archbishop of Canterbury. It is largely supplied from the text of his addresses at the Mission to Oxford University in 1960. Although it has some very good things in it, it must challenge comparison with C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and, alas, it suffers in the process.

T.W.B.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CANON LAW, by *The Rt. Rev. R. C. Mortimer.* Church Information Office, 2s. (by post 2s. 3d.).

This, the 35th Hale Memorial Sermon, by the Bishop of Exeter, is the intelligent man's guide to Canon Law and Canon Law Reform. As such, it is virtually faultless and highly to be recommended to all who wish to understand the rudiments of this subject.

T.W.B.

We regret that in the April issue of PRISM we quoted the price of the New Canadian Prayer Book as 6s. It is 11s. 3d.

Prayer (5) Difficulties

Sister Edna Mary, c.s.a.

It is easy enough to talk about prayer as thinking of the person one loves, or speaking to him, but the hard fact remains that for most of us, most of the time, prayer does not seem a bit like this. Our minds do not naturally turn to thoughts of God as they often do to thoughts of other people whom we love; and when the time we have set aside for prayer approaches we do not always look forward to it as we do to a meeting with a friend. All too often we are glad to seize any excuse to do something else instead; or, even if we have been really looking forward to our time for prayer and start with the best intentions, the moment we kneel down our minds dart off on to every possible subject except the one in hand: the lecture or the letter we have to write, the awkward interview ahead of us, the coal we have forgoten to order or the milk bill still unpaid, messages to be delivered and mending to be done, and every other aspect of our life comes crowding along, until we feel that our mental state can better be compared to the London rush-hour than to a quiet visit to a friend.

Why is this? And what are we to do about it?

Both dislike for prayer and distractions when we pray are reflections of the fact that a man's relationship with God touches every aspect of his life. The analogy of personal relationships can help, but it must not be pushed too far; our relationships with other human beings do not make the total demands upon us that does our relationship with God. It is possible to enjoy very real human friendship and still keep a great part of one's private life apart from that relationship; differences of opinion, or difficulties in other relationships, need not affect the friendship. But no part of our life can be kept out of our relationship with God. It is failure to recognise this, or to accept it, that often lies behind the Christian's disinclination to pray; we try very hard to enjoy friendship with God on one particular frontier of our lives, and to keep the rest to ourselves to do what we like—but we cannot do this, and often it is our attempt to do so that makes prayer so difficult. The only answer to this difficulty is to bring to God the parts of our lives

which we have been trying to keep to ourselves; that is, quite simply, to be firm with ourselves, to keep the time we have offered to God in making a rule of prayer, and to ask him to illuminate with his love the whole of our life and show us what selfishness or other sin it is that makes us want to keep out of his presence.

When we have come to God in this intention, the very thoughts that seem most to distract our prayers are often tokens of the totality of our relationship with him. The more we love another person, the more we share the affairs of daily life with them; and it is precisely because God is concerned with the whole of our lives, with our lectures and letters, our interviews, and all the jobs we have to do, that it is natural that these matters should come into our mind during our prayers. It is a common experience that tasks forgotten or deferred often come unexpectedly to mind when one is at prayer, or a line of thought (quite different, often, from the actual subject of prayer) comes into one's mind to suggest the solution to a problem long on the horizon. If God is concerned with the whole of our life, it is natural that this should be so, and it is good. When it becomes wrong is when we turn our minds deliberately from God to dwell on the task to be done, or to pursue the line of thought that may solve our problem; this can be done another time—for the present our concern is to be with God, and we must turn our thoughts back to him, noting down the idea that has come, thanking God for it, and then getting on with the business of prayer.

The great thing in dealing with distractions is not to worry about them. All our lives we are doing more than one thing at a time. We can be enjoying a friend's company, and still noticing the surroundings, other people who are around us, remembering things we have to do, and so on. There is no sense of discourtesy to him unless we become so absorbed with these other things that we cease to attend to what he is saying. So it is in our conversation with God. We inevitably notice and think of many other things, many of them (as I have suggested) because they form part of our total relationship with God, but it is only when we dwell on them rather than on God that they interfere with our prayer. The best way, therefore, is not to fight against such distractions, which immediately centres our attention on them instead of on God, but as far as possible to disregard them, having noted down what is profitable to remember—a notebook is absolutely

essential to concentration in prayer, for once we have noted down stray thoughts we can put them out of mind without fearing that we shall have forgotten them when they would be useful. Speaking of distractions, the *Cloud of Unknowing* tells the reader to "look over their shoulder" to God beyond—a metaphor which has a new vividness to those who travel in crowded trains and are adept at following an interesting item in a fellow-passenger's newspaper!

Distractions form a daily trial in prayer, but there are of course other difficulties, perhaps the most serious of which is the sense of unreality, when there is no consciousness of the presence of God, and one feels that it would be as profitable to talk to a wall. This is a state which all the great masters of the spiritual life have experienced and described, and which in greater or less degree is known to everyone who really is trying to live a life in which prayer has a vital part. At times such as these, books of prayers can be a help, especially one's own collection of prayers which have been useful when prayer has been easier; but the main thing is to recognise that times such as these give us the chance to prove our love of God. If we love him for what we get out of it then we shall feel that our prayer has achieved nothing at all, that there is no point in battling with wandering thoughts, and that our time would have been much more profitably employed in reading a book. But if we love God for himself then we shall know that we have been doing what he wanted of us and that whatever it is like to us our prayer has been acceptable to him. To plod along with the effort to pray when it seems both uncongenial and unfruitful is the best prayer that we can offer, for it is seeking God's presence simply because he is God and not because of the pleasure that we find in it.

The corollary of this is that we have to be loyal in our prayers whatever we feel like. To fail to pray is deliberately to turn our back on God, to break off communication with him. This is the point of making a rule of prayer. It is easy to fall into the temptation of arguing that one is in the wrong mood, that one is too tired to pray with attention, too preoccupied to pray with concentration, too angry to pray with reverence, too sinful to come to the All-Holy in prayer. Here forethought in putting aside the best time for prayer, and penitence for the sins we put between God and ourselves, are both essential; but the most important thing is to remember that, although he is all-holy, majestic, king, our God is also our Father, and it is as Father that he has taught us to address

him in prayer. In a happy home a child knows that he can come to his parents for whatever he needs and in whatever mood he is, that his parents will love him and help him none the less whatever mood he is in. This is the relationship which the Christian has with God; he does not have to put on court dress and practise a formal speech; he can come to God in the mud and rags of the prodigal son, knowing that his Father will welcome him with all his love. He may only be able to say, "Dear God, I am sorry that I am in such a flaming temper . . . I do want to control it, and have tried . . . but here I am, please help me"; or he may have to say, "O God, you know how tired I am, that I would like to pray better than this, but I am too tired to think . . ."; the more unworthy we know that we are to approach God in prayer, or the more distaste that we feel for prayer, the greater should be our care to be regular in our times of prayer, and the greater our effort to make acts of prayer throughout the day, for these are the times when our need of communion with God is greatest; and if we do make this effort we can be sure that our prayer is pleasing to God, however displeasing it may be to ourselves.

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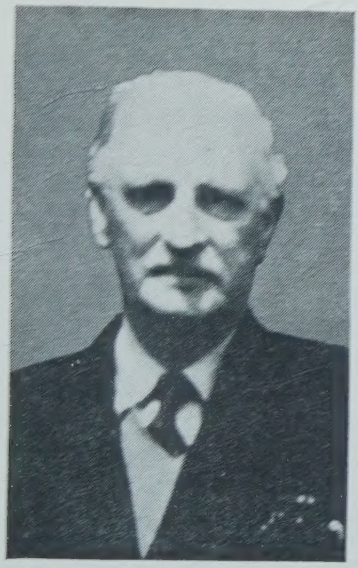
PHILIP MAIRET

Philip Mairet is a man of such varied gifts and diverse experience that it is not easy for the writer of a biographical note to produce a clear and convincing portrait of him. Born in London and passing his life there and in Sussex (he now lives in Lewes) he is of French-Swiss extraction, his forbears being skilled craftsmen engaged in the watchmaking industry in Le Locle. Philip began his working life as a craftsman himself, working principally in stained glass; a little later he became an actor with the Old Vic company in its earlier days, playing chiefly clown's parts in Shakespearean drama. Much of the first world war he passed in work for the Red Cross. After that war he worked under the famous journalist A. R. Orage—whose biographer he became, and developing an interest in the individual psychology of Alfred Adler, became his representative in this country. When Orage returned to England in 1932 and founded *The New English Weekly*, Mairet went to work for him, and on Orage's sudden death in 1934 succeeded him as editor, which he remained until the paper came to an end in 1949, being aided by an editorial committee which included T. S. Eliot, T. M. Heron and M. B. Reckitt. But behind these public activities, Mairet's life had been a prolonged spiritual quest, which led him, after long exploration of the wisdom of the East, to embrace the Faith and to enter the Church. He attached himself to the informal and loosely-organised "Christendom Group" and was prominent in the middle of the 'thirties in work for the Church Union School of Sociology and was a notable contributor to the composite volume *Prospect for Christendom* (1945).

Mairet has written much on many themes but published relatively little in book form, his most recent book being the authoritative biography of the famous sociologist, Patrick Geddes, with whom he had at one time worked. His time is now much occupied with translation work from the French, for which he is greatly in demand. Though now in the middle seventies, Philip is as active as ever and few men have deeper insights than he into the problems and predicaments of our time or can write with more originality and vividness about them.

PRISM PERSONALITY: 7



M. B. RECKITT

"The trouble with growing old", says Maurice, an improbable 73, "is that you stay young." Certainly he has been young for a pretty long time: he speaks with equal familiarity and fondness of G. K. Chesterton and Valerie Pitt ("they look so alike!"), of Orage's *New Age* and (sometimes at least) of PRISM. What keeps him so fresh, and leads him to delight and delight in both friends old and new, is what he refers to modestly as his "availability". As a self-confessed member of the declining *rentier* class, he has always been able to tackle the many demands made upon his time. Thus not only did he edit *Christendom* throughout its life from 1931-1951, but has done everything from backroom thinking for G. D. H. Cole's Guild Socialism to making two contributions to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—on Croquet and Christian Socialism. This reflects his most notable single achievement, in the Scott Holland lectures for 1946, later published as *From Maurice to Temple*.

There is no space for cataloguing all his other talents: suffice it to say that he is an expert ballroom dancer, has written numerous amateur revues and is now in the thick of his first mystery novel.

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Printed by Oxley & Son (Windsor) Ltd., 4 High Street, Windsor